











point—the level of spiritual commitment and faith which must necessarily have its ritual expression (what are many rituals if not the language and symbols of faith?). Religion must be attacked at its weakest point—its inability to adequately address itself to, let alone resolve, the *secular* (the basic economic, political and social) problems of human existence. This is also the best way to bring about the ultimate disappearance of religious faith.

Such a programme involves a great deal more than just secularising the nation-state apparatuses, or pushing a secular ideology, namely, the scientific temper or outlook. It is not the expansion of knowledge that is so crucial, as the expansion of popular power. In fact, the latter is the pre-condition for the former. Changes in material relations, that is, the prior levelling of economic, political and social powers is the only way to generate on a mass level the scientific temper. Advocates of the 'knowledge or information society' that is supposed to soon swamp large parts of the world are, in general, deeply committed to preserving elitism. Insofar as they want secularism it is supposed to come through a typically patronising and top-down route, through expanding the power of the 'knowledge elite' not of the masses. It is this elite which is supposed to be the true secular saviours of the society of the future, its principal agent of progress.

For Marxist secularists there is another

route. The bourgeois state must be broken and replaced by the workers' state and this very state must be steadily dismantled through the internationalisation of the revolutionary process, the ever deeper democratisation of power, the ever greater accessibility for all to material goods and nature's gifts, ever greater international co-operation and class solidarity, the progressive dismantling of national boundaries, the systematic erosion of class structure, exploitation, various social oppressions of sex, race, caste, and so on. It is through the formulation of a holistic materialist programme and through the struggle to implement it, i.e. through the struggle for socialist revolution, that Marxists will best succeed in promoting an ever deepening secularisation. In countries like India and the Islamic world at least (and one suspects in lots of other places too) revolutionaries must learn how to mute their atheism, but never their secularism.

#### Note

1 Modernisation as a concept standing on its own without being given a determining class content is utterly vacuous as an analytical tool, though much beloved by many theorists these days, and any approach which uses this term as a key analytical tool leads to the most sterile and unilluminating theories of historical change, theories which are usually marked by the crassest technological determinism.

## REVIEW

### Entrepreneurial Background and Performance

H K Paranjape

*Entrepreneurial Performance in Indian Industry* by R A Chama, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1985, pp xi + 100, Rs 180.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP is an area that has been very much neglected in academic studies in India. It is thus commendable that he has taken up a pioneering empirical study of the entrepreneurial phenomenon in India. Not only the results of the analysis but also its methodology and its limitations are bound to be of considerable interest to those who are attempting to develop further work in this area.

The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial background and entrepreneurial performance. It also attempts to scrutinise environmental factors which affect a vigorous display of entrepreneurship, to analyse the differences between successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurs and to shed some light on the strengths and weaknesses of emerging entrepreneurs. Further it examines the strength of the boards of directors and the changes in the boards and attempts to see

whether the turnover in the board membership is correlated to corporate performance.

When dealing with the concepts of 'entrepreneur' and 'entrepreneurial performance', a list of possible functions performed by the entrepreneur is given—which is somewhat uneven in character; it mixes up what may be generally important for an entrepreneur anywhere and any time, with what is relevant in the current Indian context, without making a distinction between these two types of functions. Thus, the author puts "perception of opportunities for profitable investment" on par with "obtaining an industrial licence" or "negotiating with foreign collaborators" as one of the important functions of the entrepreneur.

There is also a certain looseness in the formulations. Thus, at one stage, the author gives (p 3) a formula,  $EP = f(SB, MF, KA, PS, EV)$ —where EP stands for entrepreneurial performance and this is supposed to

depend upon various factors which are indicated in the formula. SB stands for socio-cultural background of the entrepreneur; MF for motivational force; KA for knowledge and ability, and so on. What is peculiar is that the statement of such a formula would lead one to imagine that there is going to be some quantitative relationship established between the two sides of the equation. But—and probably rightly—there is no such attempt. What is then, however, unclear is what purpose a formula like this serves!

The study attempts to judge entrepreneurial performance in terms of the changes in some financial and non-financial indicators. Among the former, it includes total assets, gross block, net sales, gross profit, net profit, and net worth. Among the latter are included factors like periods involved—implementation of projects and choice among what are called "strategic alternatives". It mentions other indicators such as export promotion, import substitution, contribution to goals like defence efforts, rural development and charitable purposes. It has been able to present some data about R and D and gives considerable attention to the strength and turnover in the boards of directors.

Some of the author's stated expectations from the study are a little unrealistic. It is not only claimed that the study identifies the factors which make the Indian entrepreneurs succeed or fail, but should help the identification of factors which need strengthening and checking, and even help to avert impending corporate disaster.

The study formulates a number of hypotheses to aid analysis. While these are well-stated, one hypothesis—which is mentioned does not receive adequate attention in the analysis. The hypothesis relates to the technical knowledge of the entrepreneur and its importance for his success, and states that a correlation between these two factors would depend upon the size of the enterprise; there would be less positive correlation in the larger sized enterprises as compared to smaller sized ones. But there is no attempt later to distinguish the entrepreneurs under study according to the sizes of enterprises. In fact this is a serious inadequacy of the study. Which type of entrepreneur takes up which sizes of enterprises should have been an important aspect of the study; but this is not done. The only data presented relate to the actual number of enterprises of large, medium and small sizes at different stages of the period of study. But, even when examining the performance indicators, there is no attempt at relating performance to initial size. One wonders why this aspect has been ignored. Were relevant data not available? There is no explanation.

#### CHOICE OF SAMPLE

While one cannot question the choice of the particular period or a particular type of



people and not the followers of a particular religion. But it is clear that the word is a very old one as it occurs in the *Avesta* and in old Persian. It was used then and for thousand years or more later by the peoples of Western and Central Asia for India, or rather for the people living on the other side of the Indus river. The word is clearly derived from *Sindhu*, the old, as well as the present, Indian name for the Indus. From this *Sindhu* came the words Hindu and Hindustan, as well as Indos and India. The famous Chinese pilgrim I-tsing, who came to India in the seventh century A.D., writes in his record of travels that the 'northern tribes', that is the people of Central Asia, called India 'Hindu' (*Hsin-tu*) but, he adds, 'this is not at all a common name.....and the most suitable name for India is the Noble Land (*Aryadesha*)'. The use of the word 'Hindu' in connection with a particular religion is of very late occurrence.

"The old inclusive term for religion in India was *Arya dharma*. Dharma really means something more than religion. It is from a root word which means to hold together; it is the inmost constitution of a thing, the law of its inner being. It is an ethical concept which includes the moral code, righteousness, and the whole range of man's duties and responsibilities. *Arya dharma* would include all the faiths (*Vedic* and *non-Vedic*) that originated in India; it was used by Buddhists and Jains as well as by those who accepted the *Vedas*. Buddha always called his way to salvation as the '*Arya Path*.'" (pp: 52-53).

It was evident that Hinduism is, in a more real sense, a pattern of social living in which the operative categories are caste, and more than that, sub-caste (*Jatis*). Analogies have been the biggest enemies of reason and if the Greeks had committed the error of understanding the non-Greek world in terms of Greek philosophies, the Arabs as their successors and continuators of traditional knowledge, committed a similar error of understanding the non-Arab world mostly in terms of the stylised Islamic-Arab categories. Thus it appeared evident that, for instance, if Islam is an ordained faith 'with a God, a Book, a Prophet and belief in life hereafter, etc.', then Hinduism also had to be either an ordained faith or a non-ordained faith, but faith it has to be within the definition of the Judaic-Christian Islamic amalgam of the Semetic religious doctrine. Similarly if Christianity has an organized Church, then Hinduism also has to have an organized Church, or a semblance thereof. This approach has vitiated a clearer and an authentic understanding of Hinduism, with the result that its peculiar and distinctive nature has been missed. Hinduism is no religion in the Semetic sense of the word, that is, in terms of having an authentic revealed book, a prophet or prophets, a sacrosanct Church and an orthodoxy which is capable of identifying heresy. There is no duality of orthodoxy and heresy in Hinduism, because there is no defined and closed faith, no established Church based on the foundations of a divine scripture revealed by a 'Divine Being' to divinely ordained Prophet/Prophets. This gives Hinduism a flexibility and

resilience and a traditional base wide enough to cover the syndrome of the entire Indian culture. That is why the revivalism of Hinduism takes the form of revivalism of ancient culture, symbols, values, idiom and simplistic traditional pattern of living. It does not take the particular form of the revival of a faith because there is no such ordained, integral and defined faith to be revived.

In this sense Hinduism may be very broadly taken as the expression of the traditional social organization, cultural mores, value-structure and the speculative intellectual content of ancient India. It is thus a socio-cultural pattern, which is as much a part of the people subscribing to one belief-pattern commonly known as Hinduism as of those professing other faiths. In this sociological sense (and one would not like to be misunderstood on this point) it might be said that the Indian Muslim in his attitudes, behaviour, some social values and customs, is basically a variation on the Hindu. This becomes all the more obvious if one examines the nature of Islam and the Muslims in other parts of the world. The entire love-hate relationship of the Indian Muslim with the Indian Hindu is peculiar and *sue generis* because he is unable to transcend the impact of the socio-cultural values of Hinduism. He tries to reconcile this heritage with his belief in Islam sometime in a stride, but at other times he becomes irrationally obsessed by the seeming contradictions and conjures in his mind imaginary fears of irreconcilability. One such moment in the collective life of the Indian Muslims came when their dominant elite driven by narrow political expediency allowed despair and un-reason to veto wisdom thereby destroying the very *raison d'être* of the composite living in their homeland by leaving the political entity of India, lock stock and barrel to form a so-called Islamic State. The architects of despair maintained that this political act of separation will not only bring heavenly bliss to the Muslims but also 'liberate' the community from the 'Hindu' heritage, little knowing that culture and heritage is not merely an expression of religious belief, but something more complex which just cannot be wished away. Therefore, the fact that a part of the Muslims in their flight from the so-called 'Hindu heritage' had succeeded only in forming another state—Pakistan—which has been a political entity, not even approximating the original proclamation of an Islamic State, based on the *Shariah*, but a mundane secular autocracy, is both instructive and revealing. The recent formation of Bangla Desh can be theoretically viewed as the refutation of the very basis on which Pakistan was originally formed.

Bangla Desh has not only exploded the myth of the 'two-nation' theory—as is recognized on all hands everywhere—but what is equally significant and is completely overlooked, is that it has also simultaneously and by the same token and logic shaken-up if not exploded the notion of 'one-nation' in the sub-continent, as well. This needs most sober, objective and systematic consideration.

#### IV

Let us first examine the irrationality of the 'two-nation, theory'.

The proponents of the 'two-nation theory' said



# SECULARISM: COMMUNAL DIMENSION

RASHEEDUDDIN KHAN

The process of modernised nation-building in India depends particularly on three major engines of change: Democracy, Socialism and Secularism. In a simplistic formulation one might add that they respectively are conceived as the main instruments of change in the political, economic and social transformation of the country.

Democracy is expected to transform the political ethos of new India by inducting into the processes of the structures of the polity the many segments and groups most of whom had hitherto remained outside the purview of what is known as the political activity. By universal politicisation of the Indian citizens democracy is to promote mass mobilisation and participation for stabilising the foundations of a new political culture in this ancient land.

The term socialism in India is used mostly to suggest, among other things, egalitarianism, a sort of central State planning, State management of major communications and of some heavy industries. It is used as a term which refutes full freedom to private enterprise, unchecked authority of the land owning classes, continuance of absentee landlordism, unchecked growth of personal wealth, etc., and above all the development of a public sector and private sector relationship in which presumably the commanding heights of economy would be under the control of the public sector. But, be that as it may.

In this article let us examine at some length the significance and implication of the third engine of change, viz., Secularism, with reference to the communal dimension.

## II

For a better appreciation of Secularism as a cornerstone of the edifice of new India it is necessary to examine at least two aspects, viz., the historical context which had given it a validity in our times and the political ramification of the concept.

The historical context in which secularism became an object of the modernising nationalists in India would reveal the type of challenge that it seeks to resolve. In the last phase of the struggle for independence communal identities acquired prominence eventually resulting in the partition of the country on the untenable premise of recognising religion as the final criterion of national identity and, therefore, of Statehood. In this sense the formation of Pakistan had established an irrational norm in the sub-continental politics. It may be stated here that partially

the dismemberment of Pakistan and formation of Bangla Desh has rectified the original irrational norm. However, the formation of Pakistan in 1947 had accentuated the fear that it might serve as a precedent for the demand of a Hindu State in India. Indeed, the extreme communal elements particularly in the Hindu Mahasabha and the R.S.S. had made demands of this character which, however, had gone unheeded in the euphoria generated by the transfer of power to the Congress dominated nationalist elite.

Secularism in India theoretically meant three things; (a) the rejection of a quasi-theocratic State form as in Pakistan and the affirmation of a non-religion based democracy; (b) the proclamation that religion is of private or group concern and, therefore, would call for equal deference by the State but it would have no relevance for the structures and functions of the State; and (c) the assertion of the unity of the people of India and the inalienable equality of all citizens of the Republic irrespective of caste and creed. The fact that a conscientious attempt had to be made first for the proclamation and then for the working of a secular state itself reveals the extent of the challenge that has to be met.

It is thus necessary to understand the nature of contemporary Indian society in order to go to the roots of the relevance of Secularism in India.

Partition of India has been largely evaluated in terms of its political implications, and because of this, other more fundamental aspects have been overlooked. It is hypothesised that partition of India in 1947 has been in effect the undoing of the slow process of adjustment of the diverse religious segments in India which was continuing for more than a thousand years in the sub-continent. In this sense the partition of India has been the single biggest determining event in the political conditioning of the people of this sub-continent. Indeed, in the last 25 years two fundamental changes have been made in the political ecology of the sub-continent, viz. the partition of 1947 of the unified Indian polity and the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971. In order to assess the nature of Indian society it is germane to understand what is commonly referred to as 'Hinduism' because a predominant majority of our people are categorised as 'Hindus' in terms of their religious faith.

## III

If at all there is a one belief pattern which is totally different from any other belief-pattern obtaining in any part of the world then that is Hinduism. One is struck by the fact that the word 'Hinduism' and 'Hindu' does not occur in any Indian language as such. The term 'Hindu' has been used by outsiders particularly the Persians, the Turks and the Mughals in order to designate the indigenous people of India, and hence the term 'Hinduism' refers to the pattern of belief and the pattern of socio-cultural values of the people of India. A very apt quotation from Jawaharlal Nehru will throw light on this aspect. In *The Discovery of India* he wrote:

"The word 'Hindu' does not occur at all in ancient literature. The first reference to it in Indian book is, I am told, in a *Tantrik* work of the eighth century A.D., where 'Hindu' means



religious group is allowed to grab a place of worship of an other community.

It is interesting to note what Rohila Thapar has to say about this incident. "The claim to places being historically associated with the biographies of the *Avatars* has also to be seen as an attempt to claim valuable property and to control vast resources provided by the offerings of pilgrims and the estates of temples. The claims to such locations are now made because the Hindus see themselves as powerful. But do we pause to give the same rights to Buddhists, Jains and animists to claim their sacred sites, which were forcibly taken over by various Hindu sects".

In the words of Rajai Kothari, "the crucial point is that the culture of violence, built over more than ten years through official connivance and extensive patronage of lumpen criminals, entered a most dangerous stage, when it was applied to the most divisive of all issues in a plural society, namely the communal issue".

In this murky and bizarre situation, which poses a serious threat to the stability and integrity of our motherland, it is gratifying to note that the authorities have been shaken out of the lethargy and are actively considering the introduction of a bill in Parliament to delink religion from politics and state. The fact that they have realised the urgency of this most important measure is a welcome sign. Doubly welcome is the fact that a communist member of Parliament has given notice to move a bill to hand over the Babri-Masjid — Ram Janmabhoomi complex to the Archaeological Department as a monument of national importance. This is the only solution of this man-made thorny problem.

Notwithstanding, the hopeless mess all around, a ray of hope is provided by the fact that there is no dearth of those in India, who have abiding faith in the secular ideology. But unfortunately the secular forces, spread over the entire country, are in complete disarray. They lack

unity and coordinated programme of action to meet this challenge. In fact their inaction on this score has already resulted in great harm to social and human values. It is high time that they realised their historic responsibility and raise their powerful voice in support of the two bills and, if necessary, come out on the streets to wage a relentless struggle against the dark forces of reaction. If they fail in their duty

at this most crucial juncture, they will go down in history as protagonists of a diseased society fraught with fundamentalism, moral absolutism, cultural chauvinism and violence. At a time, when the entire edifice of our society is crumbling under the impact of hatred and violence, silence and passivity of secular and patriotic elements assume the proportions of an unpardonable crime against humanity. [3]

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## Secularism

Thus, the birthplace of Rama or Krishna, known to all as mythical figures are pinpointed to exact longitudinal and latitudinal locations and controversies extracted from the contemporary situation there. Since Hindu mythologies are densely populated, the scope for hallowing a myriad places is a possibility that cannot be discounted. Endless controversies can be engineered at these places by anyone so bent. And today their number are legion.

But almost every community indulges in some form of mythopocia or another, to create a religious heaven for secular fermentation. Nor, in all fairness, can it be said that this is a characteristic solely of India. History is spattered with blood, in the assertion of the myth as reality, all over the world and at all times. Others may have become quiescent, though sporadic outbreaks are visible even today. But with us, it has become endemic.

We like to believe that after Independence when we rejected the two-nation theory based on religion as obnoxious and opted instead for secularism as the basis of Indian polity, we had automatically turned our backs on religion as a component of political action.

It was felt that the founding fathers were clear in their conception that in the India to

come every citizen, every group, every interest would be free to practice what they felt and believed in from the point of view of religious faith and in a personal capacity. But as a nation and people, they would submerge this devotion in public affairs and advance as one.

But as one can see, despite protestations, about secularism, the seeds of communal and religious considerations were allowed even in the Constitution by the isolation of scheduled castes and tribes and other backward sections for special attention. When elections came, tickets were handed out on communal and caste basis. While altruistic words were uttered, pragmatic actions were performed.

One need not recount in detail this increasing dichotomy of word and action practised increasingly with greater and greater cynicism over the years, leading to all kinds of opportunistic groupings and alliances far removed from any secular approach.

The fact is that religion was never divorced from politics and never will be. Religion dominates Indian life from the macro to the micro levels and political parties of every hue are not immune to its baleful influence. Even the Left parties have fallen victims to it.

The result of this long

rearguard action of surrender to communalism, casteism, religious bigotry, fanaticism, the narrowest and darkest social chauvinism and parochialism, is the strident manifestations over the years, too gruesome and sickening to be recounted. And they are so all-pervasive, sparing practically no state that the nation seems ready to see the final night of the long knives.

To blame the Sikhs and Akalis, to blame Muslim fundamentalists, to blame Christian dogmatists and all and sundry to engage in an exercise in duplicity, alas.

The Prime Minister, who blamed the Opposition for its unabashed religious opportunism recently, unfortunately, caught himself in a vulnerable position, allowing L.K. Advani to pounce on him and say, "Good, in that case break your alliance with the Muslim League in Kerala."

It was more than a clever retort, repartee or riposte. It only exposed the hollowness of the claims of the party claiming a vanguard position in secularism. If the vanguard itself contaminated how shall the main body and rearguard appear untarnished?

Not unless there is some revolution unfathomable at this time can religion be separated from politics. At this point Darshan Singh Ranpal may be singing the appropriate song. □

## In Defence of Secularism

GHULAM RABBANI TABAN

A state is a benevolent institution, whose sole object is to protect the weak against the strong, to administer justice and maintain law and order. Every state has a constitution. Our constitution declares that India is a socialist, secular, democratic Republic. Of all these values, the most important is secularism

without which there can neither be socialism nor democracy. Secularism is the cornerstone of a democratic society. But, unfortunately some of our political leaders have distorted the concept of secularism. To define it as equal respect for all religions is to limit its scientific scope. For instance, Akbar was an enlightened and tolerant ruler, who gave equal respect to all the religions. Still can we call him a secular monarch? Far from it. He was as much pseudo-theocratic as any other medieval ruler, who not only believed in the divine right of kings but also tried to impose a new religion on his subjects.

All that secularism demands is

that the state should be run not according to the outmoded political theories of the middle ages. Religion must be completely separated from politics and the state. Of course, in a secular society every citizen has the inalienable right to accept or reject any religion, which is his private affair. Islamisation of Meenakshipuram, or Hinduisation of any other "puram" should not be allowed to disturb social amity.

In the light of the above observations, can we call India a secular state, where religious ceremonies of a particular faith-system are observed at official functions, a religious place is used to proclaim Khalistan and a

Manubhawan  
25 (25) / 1977



# MY GANDHI

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

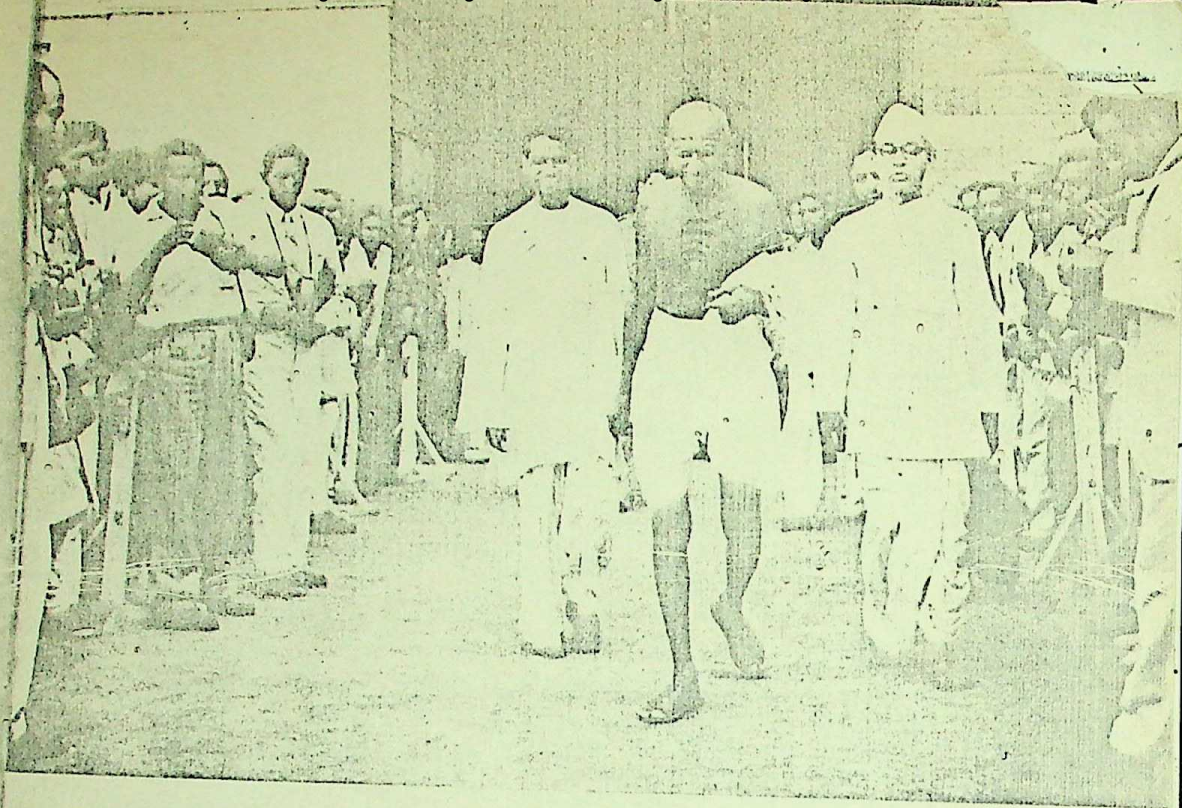
*Most prophets are dependent upon their disciples for much of their personal and spiritual qualities. Gandhi performed miracles, it is widely acknowledged, but not in a vacuum nor without the steady presence—moral as well as physical—of a small group of fervent, dedicated believers. In America, in the 1920s, Gandhi had at least one such disciple. In April, 1921, the Reverend Dr. John Haynes Holmes, minister of the Community Church of New York, introduced Gandhi to the American people in a sermon, "Who Is the Greatest Man in the World Today?" Without equivocation, Dr. Holmes named Mohandas K. Gandhi. In this sermon, and a series of others which were to follow up until 1949, the year Dr. Holmes retired from the ministry, he spoke with enthusiasm, awe, and insight about the progressing career of Gandhi. On many occasions, as in that first sermon, he compared Gandhi's life to that of Christ's, an opinion in which he never faltered. As editor of the magazine Unity in the Twenties and the Thirties, Dr. Holmes wrote frequently on Gandhi. Gandhi's autobiography was first published in America in this magazine in serial form.*

*In 1931, Dr. Holmes was among those waiting to receive Gandhi when he arrived in England*

*aboard the Rajputana for the Round Table Conference. He renewed his friendship with the Mahatma in 1947. On that occasion, Dr. Holmes was cited by Benares Hindu University for spreading the message of Gandhi to the Western world. Dr. Holmes' correspondence with Gandhi was active and loyal. Deeply saddened by Gandhi's death, he wrote to Devadas, "Your father was not only the greatest but also the most lovable of men. I have felt in his death an acutely personal loss which has almost broken my heart."*

*Dr. Holmes, a graduate of Harvard College and the Harvard Divinity School, was one of the co-founders of the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association for the advancement of Colored Peoples in the United States. In addition to his theological writings, he collaborated on an anti-war play in 1935 with Reginald Lawrence, If This Be Treason. In 1953, Dr. Holmes wrote an intimate account of his experiences with the Mahatma, My Gandhi. Dr. Holmes was a great collector of books by and about Gandhi—all of which were deposited in the Harvard University Library shortly after his death in 1964.*





*Gandhi leaving the Viceroy's House, New Delhi, in April 1946 after a meeting with Lord Wavell.*

I was one among a multitude of persons who were blessed with Gandhi's friendship. I corresponded with him on casual occasions, and on two or three of the great crises of his career. I met and talked with him, first, in London in 1931, and again in New Delhi in 1947, thus seeing him against a background of my Western and his Eastern civilization. Through long periods of time and at great distances, I carried Gandhi in my heart, and grew to love him as my own. All this is too scant to constitute a chapter in the Mahatma's life. But it is a part of the record, and is so set down.

Some will complain that my contact with Gandhi, while pleasant, was none the less quite unimportant. I do not complain at this

complaint, as I never tried to make this relationship with the Mahatma important, nor myself important for having had it. But there is an importance which attaches to anything that has to do with a really great man. And there is a duty which imposes itself upon anybody who has touched greatness to share with the world the privilege which he has had. . . .

Gandhi came into my life. At the moment I most needed him, I discovered that there was such a man. He was living in the faith that I had sought. He was making it work and proving it right. He was everything I believed but hardly dared to hope. He was a dream come true.

I have already stated that, so far as I can



remember, I had never in my life up to that time heard Gandhi's name. But here it was, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, spread like a banner on Gilbert Murray's pages in the *Hibbert Journal*. I know I had never heard the story of the exploits of this extraordinary man in the rebellion of his fellow countrymen in South Africa, which he had so patiently and bravely led against the prejudice of the people and the oppression of the government. But here was the outline of it in a few vivid words set down in Professor Murray's articles on conscientious objection to participation in war. Gandhi! Why did I not know this name? Gandhi! Who was this man, and what did he look like? GANDHI! How had he gotten into South Africa? How had he organized his nonviolent resistance campaign against the inequity and injustice which ground the coolie Indians into the dust of the white man's rule? Above all, by what miracle had this one man sustained the fight for twenty years, without violence or bloodshed, and at last carried it through to victory? There was little in what Professor Murray had written to satisfy my curiosity. But this little was quite enough to prod me wide awake, and to shake me, like a midnight earthquake, to the very foundations of my being. I lived the experience of John Keats when he first read Chapman's *Homer*, and wrote his immortal confession,

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken.

... I left the library that afternoon in a daze of wonder and excitement. I must learn about this man whom I had so unexpectedly discovered. I must get information to dispel my ignorance. But my quest proved to be difficult. People in general and scholars in particular seemed to know as little about this Indian in South Africa as I did. For Gandhi had not broken into the magic circle of the public press. He had not yet attracted the attention of journalists who hold the key to the closed door of contemporary knowledge. There was material, of course, published in South Africa, but this was mostly inaccessible in America. Not until I went to England in 1922 did I lay hold on some of this material, and have the great good fortune to meet Mr. Henry S. L. Polak, early associate of

Gandhi who was the first to write of him. My search, however, proved to be mostly an experience of frustration, but all the while, in my early bafflement and occasional despair, I felt within me the ever-deepening conviction that I was on the right track. This Gandhi was a great and wonderful man. Where was there anybody to match him in our troubled and wicked world? Did he not hold in his heart the secret of man's deliverance from the evils, mostly of man's own choosing, which were now besetting him and threatening to destroy him? Must he not be proclaimed at once as a world leader, the compeer of the greatest men of our own or any other time?

The more I thought of it, the more this conviction grew upon me. It was under its impress—an intuition of the soul rather than any persuasion of the mind—that I climbed tremulously into my pulpit on Sunday morning, April 10, 1922, to preach to my people on the subject, "Who Is the Greatest Man in the World?" and to answer my own question, M.K. Gandhi, of India. The audacity of this declaration, in the light of what was known, and not known, at that time about Gandhi here in our Western world, seems now incredible. A great audience had gathered, for the subject of my discourse was a riddle which titillated the public imagination. Interest was keen, as the war had brought many men to the conspicuous attention of mankind, and people wanted to know which one I would choose to be supreme. But all was confusion when I named Gandhi, for few had ever heard of this Indian, knew even that he was an Indian, and fewer still knew anything about his career. This confusion is the explanation of the fact that my sermon did not carry very far in the public prints. Newspapers are not expected to present dictionaries and encyclopædias with their news reports. But by some strange miracle of fortune, the sermon found its way to India—first, the story that I had declared Gandhi to be "the greatest man in the world," and later the full text of what I had said to justify this judgement. This was widely published, even in the native press, and everywhere stirred interest and acclaim. The Indians knew Gandhi, and already revered him. And here was evidence that the West was discovering him, and recognizing and welcoming his work for the liberation of his people.



Everything that has happened since that date, now over thirty years ago, every word spoken and deed done by Gandhi, his life, his death, the applause of men, all have conspired, as it were, to confirm my original pronouncement. And today the whole world accepts all that I dared, at that early hour, to declare. Nay more, far more! For Gandhi is today listed among the immortals. His people name him with Buddha, and so enroll him in the pantheon of the spirit....

It was Saturday, the 12th of September, 1931—a cold, rainy and dismal day. I was in London, to meet Gandhi. "Charlie" Andrews, beloved of Gandhi through many years, had sent me word that the Mahatma was landing that very morning at Folkestone, and would I come and join the little group of friends who would be there on the pier to meet and greet him on his arrival. Gandhi's mission in England, as all the world knew, was to attend the impending sessions of the famous Round Table Conference on Indian affairs.... In a few moments, which seemed like hours, we were aboard the ship, and I was standing at the door of Gandhi's cabin, awaiting my turn to be received. It was here I had my first glimpse of the Mahatma.

He was sitting crosslegged upon his berth, engaged in earnest conversation with Reginald Reynolds, who was a member of the Quaker group which had been appointed to welcome Gandhi in the name of the English Friends. His head and shoulders were bent forward in a listening attitude, so that I could not see his face. A naked arm, long and lean and wiry, reached out of the shawl, flung lightly about his shoulders, and took a paper from Reginald's hand. There was a quick interchange of words, a fitting smile, and the conference was over.

It was now my turn. I stepped into the little cabin. Instantly, when Gandhi saw me, he jumped to his feet, and with the lithe quick step of a schoolboy, came forward to greet me. I cannot now seem to remember whether or not he gave me the familiar Hindu salutation. But I felt his hands take mine with a grasp as firm as that of an athlete.

"I wish you might have met me at Marseilles," he said, referring to his landing at the French port, and taking a train north to the Channel and Folkestone.

I replied that I was afraid that I would be in

the way—that I was always reluctant to intrude upon busy and important people. Whereupon he rebuked me gently, and invited me to be with him in London. Then the conversation drifted, as conversations have a way of doing on such occasions, to other and more general themes. I do not recall particularly what was said. I was too excited and confused to make note of Gandhi's remarks. But I shall never forget those bright eyes shining through his spectacles, his voice so clear and yet so gentle, his whole presence so simple and yet so strong. We had only a few precious moments together—others were pressing upon us and clamoring for attention. So I withdrew and contented myself with watching this man whose spirit had reached me, years before, across the continents and seas of half the world.

I have often been asked to describe my initial impression of Gandhi. I do not find this question hard to answer. It centered, first of all, in my somewhat amusing recognition of the fact that he looked exactly like the photographs and cartoons that I had seen of him in recent years. In one way, this was inevitable, so distinctive were the characteristics of his personality. In another way, this was remarkable, so difficult was it to get Gandhi before a camera or drawing board. I suppose I have seen hundreds of his pictures, but I find it hard to remember one for which the Mahatma had made a deliberate pose. In an interview with him at New Delhi, on my visit to India in 1947-1948, I was accompanied by my son. I asked if the latter could "snap" us as we talked. Gandhi smiled, said that he was used to these "instruments of torture," and went right on in his conversation with me, as though nothing else were going on at all. Gandhi had no time, least of all any interest, in posing for pictures. So photographs and drawings were in a very special sense of the word, mere glimpses of a man in action. And here he was, precisely the man I had seen so many times in the newspaper or on the screen. As I watched the scene in the crowded cabin of the ship, I felt as though I were looking at mute representations of the Mahatma suddenly come to life.

My second and strangely simultaneous impression was of the infinite grace and charm of Gandhi, who, in his physical appearance, was so awkward. Thus, everybody who entered this little room in which we stood, was, in one way



or another, under strain, and thus uneasy. The officials present were anxious that there should be no error or mischance in the proceedings of the occasion. Journalists were eager to get their stories, photographers their pictures, each one his own and thus original. Friends were embarrassed by the difficulties of getting at their beloved Mahatma, and paying him the attention and protection which a tired man would welcome. Some few persons, like myself, were frankly frightened—this stupendous personal experience was too much for our equanimity and courage! But all these varied reactions speedily vanished, like the morning mist, before Gandhi's easy grace. What we saw at the start was the physical appearance of one of the world's great figures. But this almost instantly passed into the spiritual presence of a loving and infinitely lovable man. What we felt, in the first few moments, was reverence and awe, but this was immediately caught up and absorbed by his simplicity, innocence, and charm. Gandhi's attitude had all the naturalness and spontaneity of a little child. There was in him and about him not an iota of self-consciousness—no pose, pretentiousness, or pride. In no time at all, Gandhi had us all laughing, as completely at our ease as though we had known one another and him for years. If, in this world of varied personalities, there is a single man even half as charming, and thus as irresistible, as Gandhi, I have not seen him. . . .

I last saw Gandhi on my visit to India in 1947-1948. I went to the Far East, on appointment by an American foundation, to lecture at Indian colleges and universities. When the invitation was received and accepted, and plans for distant traveling were under way, I wrote to the Mahatma about my journey, and asked if I could come and see him. He answered promptly and as follows:

"You have given me not only exciting but welcome news. The news appears to be almost too good to be true, and I am not going to believe it in its entirety unless you are physically in India."

. . . It was under such conditions as these, marking a supreme crisis in his life and India, that Gandhi, in the kindness of his spirit, arranged an appointment on the very day of my arrival, at the precise hour of four o'clock in the afternoon. On the very tick of this hour, for I remembered Gandhi's extreme emphasis on

punctuality, I was at Birla House. The door from the street was wide open, and I entered without ceremony, or any particular attention on the part of several secretaries or attendants who were moving about, and of one or two native newspapermen who were squatting on the threshold. Everything was easy and informal and marvelously quiet. But I soon found I was expected, and was taken without a moment's delay to Gandhi's room at the far end of the hallway on the main floor.

Gandhi was sitting crosslegged upon his linen-covered cushions placed comfortably upon the floor. He had given instructions that I should not be asked to remove my shoes, according to custom, since I would be more at my ease if I did not think of them at all. On seeing me, he extended his right hand, in smiling welcome, and seized my hand in the warm clasp which was the familiar gesture of my country and not of his. Then, without a word, he beckoned me to a chair placed close in front of him, and asked me to sit down. . . .

One thought smote me with astonishment on this visit, and has lingered with me since. I refer to the fact that, as I looked upon Gandhi in New Delhi, I seemed to see the same man I had earlier seen in London in 1931. Seventeen years had passed since that first meeting, and they had apparently not touched the Mahatma at all. Oh yes—his hair had whitened, and retreated farther back from the broad and open brow. But I could see no wrinkles, nor looseness of the flesh. He walked more slowly, with a step which had lost its quick and lithe response. But his strength was quite unexhausted, as witness his pilgrimage into Bengal, to stay the uprisings and the violent fighting in that unhappy region. Certainly he appeared the same, apart from unimportant aspects of face and body. As I talked with him, I could feel that it was only the day before that I had been with him at Kingsley Hall, and that all the years between had been rolled back and were now as though they had never been. Here was a man who had mastered the regimen of life—had broken the barriers of the flesh, and entered already into the pure realm of the spirit. Gandhi had been quoted as promising his disciples that he would live to be a hundred and twenty-five years old. I had taken this to be an expansive statement of the Mahatma's continuing good health, already extraordinary for a man of



seventy-eight living constantly in the midst of alarms. What was my astonishment when I heard one of the outstanding public leaders of India, governor of a great province, a man of high intelligence and unimpeachable character, declare in all seriousness that he believed that great age. Having seen Gandhi, who was I to doubt? . . .

My last meeting with Gandhi was brief, hurried, unsatisfactory, and yet to me a benediction. . . . Quickly, as though under inspiration, I decided to go to Birla House, and wait there until there came some happy interval when I might see the Mahatma if only for a moment snatched between two interviews. In the blazing heat of early afternoon, I made my way to the house, and entered without interference or even inquiry. Fortune was with me, for who was this coming down the hall but Mirabehn. I told her at once of my predicament, that I was leaving and must see Gandhi, and besought her help. She smiled assurance, placed me in a small reception room, and went off to make inquiries. She was soon returned with the message that Gandhiji was sleeping—his regular afternoon nap. But he was due to awaken at any moment, and I could then see him at once.

We sat together and talked—some fifteen minutes, perhaps. Then came the summons, and I was in Gandhiji's presence again. It was all very simple and unimportant. I told him I must say good-bye—explained the long journey before me. I might be back, and then again I might not. I shall not forget how Gandhiji took my hand and, with his old smile of loving kindness, made me promise that I would come again. I said, Yes—if circumstances did not forbid. Which is just what circumstances did in this case! I did not see him again. This was my last farewell. . . .

I often wonder that there was so little anticipation of Gandhi's death. When people in dismay of the future would say to me that anything might happen in India today, the final disaster waiting upon any chance event, I would say, "What, for example?" And they would say, "Why, Nehru might be shot," or "Gandhi might die of some latest fast." But I do not recall ever hearing anybody suggest that Gandhi might be shot, or otherwise assassinated. His sanctity had won immunity from violence! No hand could or would be raised against him. But it was just this which shook the world, like some cosmic earthquake, when Gandhi died.

It was a few minutes after nine o'clock, on the morning of Friday, January 30, 1948. I had returned from India and was in my study, examining the mail. Suddenly there came a sharp ringing of the telephone, and the voice of one excitedly declaring that Gandhi was dead. At first I could not seem to understand. Gandhi dead? I telephoned the information bureau of the *New York Times* and made inquiry. The answer came back crisp and clear. "Yes, Gandhi is dead. He was shot last evening." "But is he dead," I asked again, finding it impossible to believe that the Mahatma could die. The reply was definite and unhesitating. Gandhi was dead!

I stood as though in a daze, unable even to think. I seemed paralyzed, and did not move. Slowly, like coming out of the ether on an operating table, I recovered consciousness. I spoke to my secretary. I thought of my wife. I ran to her in an agony of spirit. Then, when I saw her and heard her speak as though from a great distance, a strange thing happened. I began to cry, and found, to my amazement and alarm, that I could not stop. . . .

To see and talk with Gandhi was to have one's attention riveted upon his head and face, which were as distinctive, in a very different way, as the majestic countenance of Rabindranath Tagore. Gandhi has many times been described as ugly in appearance, and not altogether without reason. Thus, his large, round skull was closely shaven, except only for the little tassel of hair in the back, which was a kind of vestigial survival of innocent superstition in his Hindu faith. His ears protruded out of all right proportion to his head. Huge spectacles perched precariously upon his large and somewhat flattened nose. His big mouth and thick lips were topped by a scraggy mustache, which succeeded not at all in hiding the fact that he was minus many of his teeth. Here were features which might well be the despair of sculptor and painter. But all these were forgotten in the lustrous radiance of Gandhi's eyes and the quiet music of his voice.

His eyes were his most remarkable feature. They had depth and light, like the sea, and were without question the open doorway to his soul. They reflected every facet of his inner thought. Thus, when the talk was on some sad or tragic topic, his eyes seemed to smolder and grow dim. There was never a trace of resentment or anger, but only pity. When the conversation turned to



happier themes, his eyes began to glow, and therewith to light up unfathomable depths of feeling. His sense of humor was instant and contagious, his eyes twinkling with a merriment which was irresistible. Gandhi's voice was gentle and soft, never in my experience rising to any upper or louder tones than those befitting personal conversation. He talked always without gestures or other signs of excitement. Passion, not unknown, had been successfully subdued to the perfect discipline of the inner spirit.

To recall Gandhi to mind is to think of Matthew Arnold's familiar phrase, "sweetness and light." That is what he was—all sweetness of temper and radiation of soul. I suppose that gentleness, as I would call it, was his supreme characteristic—a gentleness which knew no weakness, but rather clothed with authority an innate strength of purpose, as awesome as the Himalayas which guarded the northern frontiers of his country. With force and violence banished from his life, there needed gentleness, firm and brave, to take their place. Along with this came humility, which was manifest in every quality and action of his life. I used to sit and marvel at Gandhi's wholly unconscious display, to all persons and under all circumstances, of the humble heart. Here was unquestionably the first among the world's great figures—a man who walked with kings and viceroys, who ruled and led the hundreds of millions of his fellow men in India, whose name echoed from the far horizons of the world, who was daily pondering policies which determined the destinies of nations, who influenced the whole range of modern life, who singlehandedly was defying the greatest empire of our time, and triumphantly, without violence or hate or killing, was wresting the freedom of his people from its clutch. And here he was ready to meet and talk, in the spirit of infinite kindness and good will, with the myriads of common folk who came knocking on his door and begging to see him—a group of students perhaps, a delegation of patriots, a troubled mother and her sick child, a passing priest or pilgrim, a chance traveler from America. All of them wanted to kneel before this spring of living water, and drink, if only a few drops, of its crystal stream. If there was any impatience or weariness in Gandhi's heart, any pride, he did not show it. There was only the inexhaustible humility of one who had dedicated

himself to God and his high purposes for men.

It was this humility which explained Gandhi's courtesy, as his gentleness explained his charm. Gandhi assumed not the slightest pretension of greatness. He played not at all upon the vast influence which was his. He surrounded himself with no barriers of authority and circumstance. He was as accessible as a mother to her children, or a friend to a dear friend. Gandhi had tamed his spirit to absolute obedience. Amid every temptation to pose and pomp he remained simple, unspoiled, and utterly sincere. His "ways were ways of pleasantness and all (his) paths were peace. (He) was a tree of life to them that lay hold upon (him)."

Lord Acton, the great English historian, wrote at least one immortal saying. "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Of all the men of history who exercised power in the sense of which Acton was speaking—political power, military power, personal power—I can think of only three who mark exception to this rule. One is Marcus Aurelius, another is Abraham Lincoln, and the third is Gandhi, these three. And the greatest of these is Gandhi.

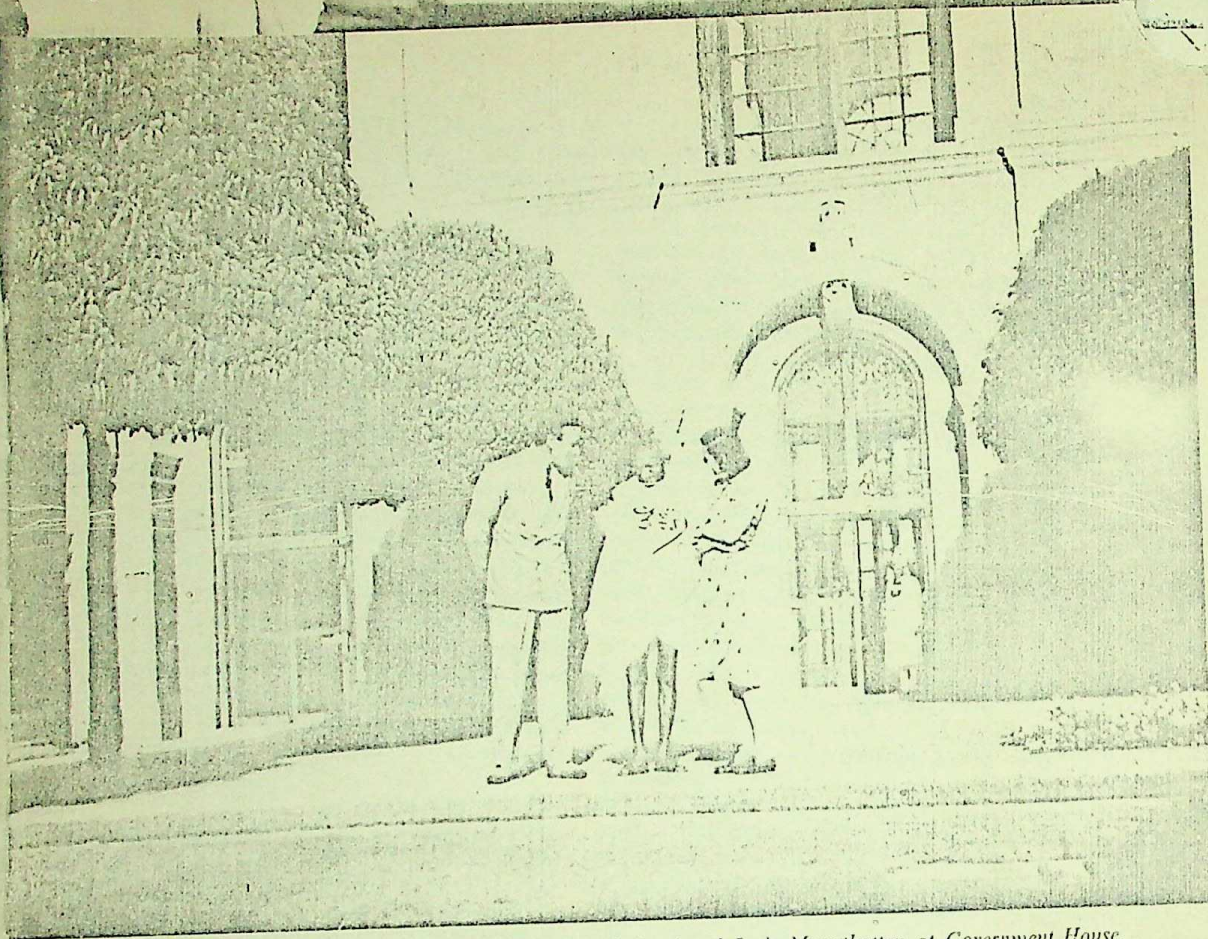
Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his address on the *Method of Nature* (1841) has this passage:

"There is no attractiveness like that of a new man.... A man, a personal ascendancy, is the only great phenomenon. When nature has work to be done, she creates a genius to do it. Follow the great man, and you shall see what the world has at heart in these ages. There is no omen like that."

Emerson refers to Napoleon and Chatham as illustrations of his theme. Gandhi is a much better illustration. There has never been anybody quite like the Mahatma either in presence or in practice. He was unique beyond all that the world has known. When he was needed, he came as a new creation, straight from the hand of God.

This was not manifest in his personal appearance, as it is, for example, in the case of Nehru, whose beauty of person is matched only by the ineffable power of his presence. Gandhi, by comparison, was insignificant, all the more as he deliberately chose to wear the scanty garb of the common people of his country, and thus lost, himself, so to speak, in the swarming multitudes





*Gandhi with Lord and Lady Mountbatten at Government House, New Delhi, in March 1947.*

about him. Like Socrates, Gandhi had certain awkward, even ugly features of face and frame, which he made no slightest attempt to disguise or hide. But these were straightway transfigured, as we have seen, by the inner grace and outward radiance of his spirit. To see and talk with Gandhi, even for a few hurried moments, was to be overwhelmingly impressed by the gentleness of the man, together with a certain dignity and authority, which gave him, in the single interview or in some great public meeting of the multitudes, supreme command of the situation. As I have already said, there was not the slightest pose or pretension about Gandhi—rather was he so gracious in his manner, so natural in his whole bearing and being, as to put the most

sensitive visitor immediately at his ease. Yet was he moved by an inner power which itself was marred by no trace of condescension. Beyond the flesh there was the spirit, which had a regal quality which instantly brought to mind the Buddha, with whom Gandhi has been so frequently compared.

But it is Jesus, be it said in all reverence, who offers truest comparison with Gandhi. Of the personal appearance of the Nazarene we know nothing. He died in his radiant youth, as Gandhi in his still active old age, each the martyred victim of fanaticism. Both went to the people, and led them in great movements of deliverance from superstition within and oppression without. In both burned the pure and radiant flame



of sacrificial love. They lived in spirit and in truth, and showed the way of life.

It was not so much Gandhi's greatness as it was the personality which won the world. Everyone who came into his presence felt and caught the contagion of his spirit. Then, as they left him and went their way, they carried with them, to be caught by other men, this inspiration to which no man was immune. . . . Mingled with this magnetism, if I may call it such, was the irresistible gaiety which swept, with laughter, over the ironies and innocencies of life. Basic was his simplicity and complete sincerity—the same to all, whether king or peasant, rajah or beggar, Hindu, Moslem, or Englishman. Instinctively men knew that they could trust Gandhi as their very own. In the case of multitudes the world around, in India and elsewhere, Gandhi became an intimate part of their lives. To think of him was a delight, to love him was an exaltation, to obey him was a privilege. So he moved everywhere among friends. Few and far between were the doors and hearts which remained closed to his approach. . . .

It was said of the Queen of Sheba that when she visited Solomon in Jerusalem, she remarked to the great King, "It was a true report that I heard in my land of the acts of thy wisdom. How be it . . . the half was not told me."

If this were true of Gandhi as it was of King Solomon, it was not his fault. For Gandhi placed no bound or ban upon his life. He hid nothing from the world. For one thing, Gandhi lived in an age of publicity, when nothing was hid from the pencil of the reporter any more than from the eye of God. Then there are Gandhi's own writings—his public addresses, his personal interviews, his letters and prayers—in which he makes plain, to all who may be interested, his ideas and ideals, his plans and policies, his reasons in extenso for what he did or did not do. His autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, is a confessional document of unique appeal. In Gandhi's *Letters to a Disciple*, the Mahatma discusses questions of food and diet, illness, cure, little incidents and accidents of daily life, with a fullness and intimacy of detail which are almost embarrassing. Then there are the testimonies and tributes, the reports and records and reminiscences, of Gandhi's followers

and friends who wrote before his death, which itself released a flood of first-hand biographical data. Only in the South African period, when the world destiny of Gandhi was not even guessed, is there any lack of this abundant literary material. The longer Gandhi lived and the higher he climbed in his leadership of the Indian people, the clearer became the content of his career.

There were depths in Gandhi, to be sure, which are difficult to fathom. He himself did not know, at least in the beginning, the mysteries of his being, or the focus of his fate. How otherwise explain certain aspects of his career and conduct in South Africa which stand so utterly contrary to the fixed pattern of his later days? Only slowly did it become apparent that the Mahatma's distinctive qualities were spiritual rather than physical or intellectual, and that the latter took on importance only to the extent that they could be useful to the former. Thus, all his life, as we have seen, Gandhi was interested in problems of physical health, which seemed to exercise a kind of fascination over his mind. But beyond a few extreme ideas and practices, he contributed little to their solution.

The vast spate of his writings through many years represents a sustained intellectual activity, but contain few if any passages of marked literary distinction. His thought worked itself out into no systematic philosophy or ordered arrangement of ideas. He cherished a devout religious faith, which he was never tempted to set up as the organizational center of a cult or sect. It was in the pure realm of the spirit that he excelled, especially as he applied his principles to economic, political, and social problems with a courage and insight which marked him as the supreme personality of his age. It was here, at this point of contact, that he met with God, communed with him in secret, and, under his divine guidance, reached his bold decisions. This was a disciplined process of putting his soul to work, with results that were patent to all, but none the less hard to understand.

Yet in Gandhi was a great simplicity! This simplicity was the product of a basic integrity, which concealed nothing, played no devious tricks, practiced no deceptions. In his life was no confusion of motive, no hesitancy, no self-distrust, no doubt. For whatever he said and



3 | did was only what he deemed to be right in the all-seeing sight of God. Gandhi was accused often enough of being "a politician cleverer than the rest because more unscrupulous and hypocritical in making God his partner. It seemed incredible that any leader of men, in such a crisis as impended upon him, could be so naive! But in due course it was seen that 2 | Gandhi was sound in his convictions and utterly sincere. To him God was not a dogma 3 | but a real presence—God was Truth, as Truth in turn was God. This meant that the Mahatma had no personal ends to serve, except as he would to his own self be true. His whole life was an obedience to God. It was as simple, and as wonderful, as that!

2 | It must be obvious by now that Gandhi was primarily a saint. From the lofty standpoint of this characterization, we can best comprehend his word and work. The Hindus knew this well when, long years ago, they sanctified him by the title recognized and fondly used by millions, of "Mahatma." It was a part of his sainthood to object to this title. He himself never used it, and it had no place in the circle of his disciples. Here Gandhiji and Bapu were the beloved names. But the tides of popular acclaim and reverence swept all opposition away, and to the multitudes he remained Mahatma to the end.

2 | Of the various attributes of sanctity, Gandhi's inextinguishable gaiety comes first. There were times, of course, too serious and indeed too terrible for laughter. Such a time was the one when I saw him last. Rapine and ruin, disaster and death, were sweeping the countryside in the struggle between Hindus and Moslems which followed upon partition. Gandhi was overwhelmed by sorrow and shame, and it was hard for him to smile. In happier and nobler times, in moments when he was making some supreme sacrifice for the freedom of his people—imprisonment, fasting, or what not—his sense of humor was irresistible. We have already seen Gandhi's amusing way of accepting imprisonment as a welcome opportunity for spinning, reading, writing, or meditation with God. This was the sunny side of his unconquerable 2 | equanimity, coupled with the embarrassment of his utterly bewildered jailors. But it was in his contacts with his friends and visitors that his gaiety was most easily aroused. Peals of

2 | laughter were the music that made beautiful his ashram. The saints, for some mysterious reason, are almost invariably happy people. St. Francis of Assisi could be stern, unbending, but was far more often joyous. In this they differ from the theologians, who are so deadly serious, and from the ecclesiastics, frequently so cruel. So it was with Gandhi, who never allowed pain, or disappointment, or frustration to get the better of him. With God on the scene there was no need to worry, or be sad. Only to be glad!

A second attribute of sanctity is disinterestedness—that selfless love which asks nothing for oneself and everything for others. Gandhi had not always possessed this saintly quality. On the contrary, he started out with much the same elements of character as may be found in ordinary men. Thus, he was ambitious of advancement in his chosen profession. He opened a law office in Bombay, partly at least to earn and accumulate money. He accepted a brief in South Africa, and charged a large fee for his services. In his family, in these days of his early manhood, he was a martinet in discipline. He must dictate and rule, and wife, children, even friends must heed his mandate. Then, little by little, and none the less surely, he purged himself of his vanities. For the sake of his people, in India and South Africa alike, he put aside all worldly interests and pursuits. Sacrifice now became the central impulse of his inner spirit. Ambition melted away. Private enterprise yielded to public service. Property became of no concern. His family was seen only as a part of the great body of mankind. At last the Mahatma became the living symbol of India's need. No home but a mud hut in the ashram, no food but a handful of nuts and rice in his beggar's bowl, no clothing but his loin cloth and shawl, no money, no possessions, no official power, he found himself for the first time free to serve India without worry or concern. Through sheer self-abnegation, he became one with its poverty-stricken millions, and a saint in their adoration and devotion. Never in all history was a sanctified leader so effective in his work for humankind, and in his asceticism so glorious an example of virtue. 2 |

What Gandhi denied himself he sought wholeheartedly for others. This is the real explanation of his heroic and ceaseless labor for the deliverance of India from the rule of the



British crown. Political independence was more or less of an abstraction—a slogan to stir the minds of millions. Gandhi came to the idea slowly, even reluctantly. Indeed, it may be said that he was at last driven to the far extreme of policy by the crass stupidity of British officials who consistently outraged the people and their leaders. But always, even in the days of fiercest contention, Gandhi regarded independence as a means to the great end of delivering the far-flung population of the land from poverty, disease, and other miseries which degraded Indians to a level of subsistence which no human beings should be expected to endure. The whole passion of Gandhi's soul was dedicated to the uplift and security of the common people. As long as they were all but naked in their need, so he would be all but naked for their sake. But always he looked beyond, to the hour of emancipation, when the fruits of their labor would be their own, and not the booty of the exploiters, native and foreign, who fed fat upon them. Not a man in all India but held the Mahatma's devotion—not a family that was not akin to his own. Gandhi's heart was big enough to contain all these multitudes, and each individual among them all had Gandhi's pity, and felt himself, to an intensive degree, to be his brother.

Of Gandhi's compassion for mankind—the poor, the outcaste, the forlorn—there can be no more effective an example than his attitude toward the untouchables, whose emancipation he sought for years with steadfast purpose. For this no date can be assigned, as the work was in character a kind of agitation in which the Mahatma was engaged through a period of years. While supporting the caste system as giving what seemed to him to be a stabilization of society not otherwise possible, Gandhi was horrified to behold a group of some sixty million men and women in India altogether outside the array of castes, who were existing thus on the lowest level of insult and indignity. There is no precise moment when the Mahatma cursed the whole idea of untouchability, and sought its abolition. Gandhi simply went ahead ignoring this wretched outlawry of a whole people, and seeking, or himself creating, ways of ending it. He knew that his personal practice would slowly but surely have an influence which would be potent. So he opened his *ashram* to the

untouchables, and usually had several of them in residence. He laid down the policy of recognizing untouchables as welcome members in the national movement for independence. He insisted upon his own personal contact with them. As St. Francis nursed the lepers and kissed their sores, so Gandhi ministered to the untouchables as occasion offered. The climax of his devotion came when he adopted an orphan girl, born of untouchable parents, and with her brought the outcastes straight into his home and heart. It was in this fashion that the mere existence of the untouchables became an issue of large public moment, especially to those who, like the Mahatma, would have India worthy of the freedom she herself was seeking. It was inevitable but none the less notable that the new constitution of India should provide for the complete emancipation of the untouchables, and thus merge them forever in the great body of Indian life. Gandhi and his followers delivered these sixty millions of pariahs from centuries of the most degrading bondage, and therewith achieved a deed which lifts the Mahatma to an enduring place among the liberators of mankind.

As we survey these exalted attributes of being, it becomes more and more manifest, as I have said, that Gandhi was a mystic of the noblest type. . . .

It would seem as though Gandhi, of all men, were much too beset by constant duties and distractions to enjoy the fruits of the mystical life. Was he not too hopelessly entangled in human affairs to win freedom for contemplation and spiritual exercise? Facts as diverse as a mother's concern for her child which she laid at the Mahatma's feet for healing, or a priest beseeching counsel for the welfare of his village, or some drama of statesmanship which must shake the British Empire and the encompassing world—these and a myriad other appeals pressed upon him day and night, and exacted attention which he did not refuse. It was always possible, of course, for him to follow the example of the multitudinous holy men who flourished in his country. The cave men who hid themselves away in grottoes or other rocky retreats, and once a year revealed themselves to their disciples; the priests who occupied the temple precincts and offered at intervals their formal prayers; the servants of God, in the Jain



and other sects, who wandered the countryside in a purity of being which they would fain convey to other men! But these ways of life were not for Gandhi. He must be in the world while not of it—thus keep constant contact with the people while seeking still the “solitariness” of God. How he worked out this dilemma is one of the most fascinating examples of his method.

Laying down the principle that he must always be accessible to those who sought him, whether it be the peasant woman in sore distress, or the Congress member to talk politics, or the passing visitor from abroad, or the latest commission of inquiry from London, Gandhi organized his life with the meticulousness of a great executive. His door was open—no man must be allowed to knock in vain. But Gandhi had learned the arts of relaxation and withdrawal. Thus, he kept rigorously to a time schedule, and thereby saved himself the gnawing worry of delay. He set aside one day each week for silence, and on this day, while seeking no arbitrary seclusion, and even communicating through the device of written notes, he would not talk or attend conferences. Then there were his periods of prayer—in the early morning and evening—in which he turned to God for the refreshment of his spirit. Lastly, and most important, was his deliberate communion with God when, in some dilemma of policy exacting momentous decisions, he sought, and in the end received, the divine command. Here his mystical powers received their supreme expression. Gandhi sought the Truth, and the Truth was God; and in the counsel of the divine mind, asked and never refused, he found his way as the troubled and yet serene leader of his people. Gandhi the mystic was never uncertain or misled after his retreats with God. On the contrary, he had found the way, and dared to walk therein.

The Mahatma seemed to lack certain essential qualities. His presence was devoid of

all physical glamour and beauty. His speech lacked eloquence and power. His pen was tireless, but not seldom uninspired. All too much of his activity was poured out, like water upon the ground, on economics and politics. But by every test of the spirit Gandhi proved himself the man. His very setting in a world of arms and hate and death seemed to prepare the way for his coming. He challenged this world, even as Jesus challenged Rome, to a duel between the sword and the spirit. In word and deed and drama, as in the case of assassination to parallel crucifixion, Gandhi met the issue. To his side he called Truth, and Love, and Peace. And as these were God, as the Mahatma knew God, the victory was his. As nations rise and fall, and civilizations disappear, the more wonderful becomes the survival of humanity. What can explain this more convincingly than the recurring visitations of the saviors who, in sole reliance upon the spirit, “make straight in the desert a highway for our God?”

Of these timeless saviors, Gandhi was one. I knew this when in 1921, to an incredulous public, I proclaimed Gandhi to be “the greatest man in the world.” Through the more than thirty years of wars and rumors of wars that have passed since that date, I have never doubted this pronouncement.

Gandhi was not infallible. He made his mistakes, and on occasions said and did strange things. But his motives were always pure, his words and deeds dictated by the noblest principles, and his spirit manifest of all those qualities of patience, humility, courage, and selfless sacrifice, which mark the few great sons of men. He organized and led a movement which was commensurate with his own unconquerable spirit. He died only to live more truly in the hearts of men. Therein lies his eternal glory.

As for us, the happy few, who saw and knew and loved him, it is enough that we found the Truth, and have now the duty to impart it to other men. ✓





# THE POWER OF GANDHI'S NONVIOLENCE

RICHARD B. GREGG

*In 1923, Richard Gregg, graduate of Harvard College and Law School, and practicing labor relations lawyer, became so impressed by Gandhi's revolutionary way of handling conflict and securing justice that he wrote to the Mahatma, asking permission to witness his methods first-hand. Gandhi replied affirmatively. Two years later, Gregg sailed for India, and for seven months lived in "wholly Indian fashion" as a student at Gandhi's ashram. Following this apprenticeship, he re-remained in India for three years to teach in a village school in the Simla hills.*

*Mr. Gregg's interest in India lasted a lifetime and he corresponded with Gandhi up until Gandhi's death. He went to India frequently—sometimes as traveler, sometimes as teacher—in the various Gandhian training schools. In 1934, Mr. Gregg wrote *The Power of Nonviolence*, which he describes as "an attempt to*

*explain in Western terminology and concepts the psychological and moral reasons for the power of Gandhi's methods."* This book, also published in England, Germany, and Argentina, is still in print (in revised editions) in the United States and India, and has served throughout the racial turmoil in America as a much sought-after handbook of civil rights for students and workers. Since 1934, Mr. Gregg has written and spoken extensively on Gandhi's ideas and practices, and several of his books have been published by the Indian press.

*Now 83 years old, Mr. Gregg reflects: "When I went to India in 1925, I had no idea of writing any book or article about what I might find there. I went to learn and that was all. But contact with Gandhi and his ideas so impressed me with the importance of the method that I felt I had to try to explain it in Western terms."*

*When people get to talking about nonviolence they readily admit that in Gandhi's hands it did have power, indeed great power. Then they usually say, "But he was a saint, and I am*

*not." Or, "I haven't such courage or selflessness or strength." Or, "That is asking too much of the average man."*

*In pondering on this, consider Prime Minister*



Disraeli's reported saying that "anything you truly believe in is practical" and Gandhi's frequent statement that successful nonviolent resistance requires a firm belief in God. From his firm belief in God came his firm belief in nonviolent resistance.

People who do not believe in God or who dislike references to what they call supernatural should know that Gandhi said that God is another name for Truth. Truth and God, he said, are the same. Instead of Truth, some people would prefer the term Ultimate Reality or Unity or Spirit. Moslems would prefer the name Allah; Hindus might use the name Brahma or Shiva or Rama; Buddhists of different schools might use still other names or no name at all. We need not quarrel over the name. We know that Gandhi was referring to a supreme intangible Power, and that success in nonviolent resistance requires a firm belief in such a Power.

How are firm beliefs acquired? One method is through prolonged experience. We all believe, for instance, in the force of gravitation. We all begin experiencing it as soon as we are born. When each baby lies on its back and waves its arms and legs around, it is experimenting with the force of gravitation. Later, when it tries to walk and finally succeeds, it is experimenting with and learning about that force. When it plays with stones or blocks and learns to put one object on top of another, it learns more about the power and constancy of gravity. As a result of all this, everyone of us believes in the force of gravity and always tries to act consistently with it in every movement of his body.

There is another way to get firm belief—by a deliberate planned series of experiences. This is the scientific method of experimentation with careful control of conditions and recording of results. The application of scientific method always begins with a hypothesis, a conscious guess or question, followed by experiments to test its truth or validity. Sometimes it is a rationally conceived possible correlation. When the scientific method is carefully carried out and tested by many observers, it usually ends with an equally firm belief. An instance is the present-day belief in the reality and the usefulness of radio waves.

Most scientists restrict their experiments to the material world of space and time. Gandhi extended the use of the scientific method to the realm of intangible, subtle human relationships, the realm of morals and of what is called spirit.

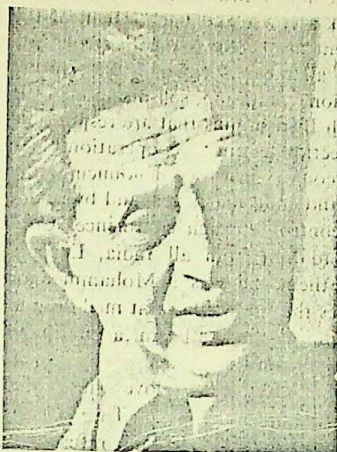
He had a hypothesis, an assumption, an intuition, that the spirit or essence of human unity—or if you prefer the name, God—exists, is present always and everywhere in all human hearts as well as transcending the whole world, and that it is supremely powerful. He proceeded to test this hypothesis every day, and year after year. He stated his belief that truth and God are synonymous. He entitled his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. He might have called it "My Experiments with the Divine Spirit," or "My Experiments with Human Unity." The result of his incessant experiments was an unshakable belief and trust in God, and in the power of God acting in all men, and hence in the power of nonviolence.

One essential feature of the scientific method is that the experiments must be capable of repetition by any other scientist who is willing to follow the same conditions, and the results must be substantially the same.

Gandhi's application of scientific method was in the realm of living forces. One of the features of living forces, what might almost be called a law, is that all life responds to suitable stimuli, and that the kind of response called growth depends on many, many, many repetitions of stimuli that are tiny—what in the moral realm we would call gentle. Gandhi recognised and practiced this law. For over fifty years all his teaching and action consisted of many, many repetitions of gentle, loving stimuli to the spirit in the hearts of all men, including his opponents. He thus caused the seed of the spirit in the hearts of almost everyone to sprout and grow and finally in many cases to govern their actions.

It is true that there were some apparent failures. That happens in laboratory experiments, too. But the successes were so many and so striking that all those who are sensitive to the development of fine human relations have been deeply impressed.





## CHANGING HISTORY WITH A WORD

Author, editor, humorist, Leo Rosten received his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago, and studied at the London School of Economics. He was visiting professor of political science at the University of California at Berkeley and is at present a faculty associate at Columbia University. As an author, Mr. Rosten is especially well-known for his two classic books of humor, which grew out of his experience in teaching English to foreign students and adults in a Chicago night school: *The Education of H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N* and *The Return of H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N*, both of which were recently reissued in one volume under the title of *The Complete K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N*. His novel, *Captain Newman, M.D.*, was a bestseller and popular motion picture, starring Gregory Peck. Among his more serious and penetrating books are *The Washington Correspondents* and *Hollywood: The Movie Colony*. He knows both cities well—in Washington, during the war, he was going to teach English to the G.I.s.

**I**ndia—March 12, 1930. The wizened, toothless, half-naked little Hindu had walked 200 miles to the sea, enlisting volunteers for a *satyagraha* ("insistence on truth") demonstration against British rule. Now, at the sea's edge,

he picked up a pinch of dried salt—calmly breaking the law that made salt a government monopoly. As his followers surged forward, native policemen "rained blows on their heads with steel-shod lathis," reported Webb Miller.

**LEO ROSTEN** and his humorist friends of the 1930s and 1940s were the first to bring the word "satyagraha" into the English language. Rosten, who was Deputy Director of the Office of War Information and special assistant to the Secretary of War, the National Defense Advisory Commission, and the Executive Offices of the President. In Hollywood, he wrote twelve movies. Mr. Rosten is also the author of *The Many Worlds of Leo Rosten*, a collection of his writings, and editor of *A Guide to the Religions of America*.

Mr. Rosten is now special editorial adviser to *Look* magazine. In 1955, he edited *Look's* celebrated "The Religions of America" series, which won for him the George Polk Memorial Award for the finest magazine article of the year. He also wrote *Look's* "They Made Our World..." series, from which his tribute to Gandhi is reprinted here. Mr. Rosten's most recent book, *The Joys of Yiddish*, is an 800-page combination of scholarship and story-telling on the English language; or, how the English language has been affected by and incorporates words from Yiddish.

he picked up a pinch of dried salt—calmly breaking the law that made salt a government monopoly. As his followers surged forward, native policemen "rained blows on their heads with steel-shod lathis," reported Webb Miller.



"Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like tenpins.... The waiting marchers groaned, sucked in their breaths at every blow, (then) marched on until struck down.... The police kicked (them) in the abdomen and testicles.... Hour after hour, stretcher-bearers carried back a stream of inert, bleeding bodies."

This terrible scene climaxed but one more passive-resistance crusade led by the man millions called Mahatma, "Great Soul" or "man of God." To the British, he was a mystic rabble-rouser, a preposterous gnome in an immaculate white *dhoti* (a diaper, they sneered) who toured the engorged cities and squalid villages to preach love, self-purification and civil disobedience—leading a goat, whose milk, unlike the cow's or buffalo's, he drank. He was a strict vegetarian, befitting his caste, and lived on fruit and nuts. He addressed meetings of hundreds of thousands, or sat silent, crosslegged, on a platform before them—and they remained silent, too, transfixed.

This Gandhi held no office, commanded no soldiers, yet paralyzed India with a word: Men simply stopped work, crippling the offices, factories, mines, railways, ignoring the courts, paying no taxes, inviting arrest by tens of thousands, filling the jails until there was no room for more. The proud British Sahibs imprisoned him again and again, but it did not help. "Jail is jail for thieves.... For me, it (is) a palace." He spent over 2,000 days in prisons, reading, meditating, and drove the British frantic with his final, bloodless weapon: fasting. Nothing so haunted Whitehall as the nightmare of what might happen in this idolatrous land if the "seditious fakir," as Churchill called him, died in a protest fast....

Gandhi set up an *ashram* (retreat) of ascetics devoted to prayer and meditation, in a search for godliness. Later, he left his lucrative law practice, returned to India and established a Tolstoyan retreat to which he admitted untouchables—horrifying even his Hindu wife, who warned that a place so defiled would fail. When funds finally ran out, Gandhi said, "We shall go to live in the untouchable quarter." He

was often stoned, vilified, almost lynched.

His moral severity alienated his four sons. He set out to become a Brahmachari ("godlike") and at 37 took a vow of celibacy. He held the New Testament as sacred as the *Bhagavad Gita* and regarded all men as equal. India's future lay in education, sanitation, self-discipline: "It is not so much British guns that are responsible for our subjection as our...cooperation." He angered his countrymen by denouncing the caste system and child marriages, and by advocating birth control through continence. Converts flocked to him from all India, Europe, America. To them, he was a Mohammed or Jesus. To gibes that he was a saint meddling in politics, Gandhi replied, "I am a politician trying...to be a saint."

He asked his disciples to love those who hated them: "It is not nonviolence if we merely love those that love us." He long refused to call the British enemies, because he admired them for "ideals (I) love.... If we are just to them, we shall receive their support." Despite the religious and caste hatreds that split India into impassioned and irreconcilable fragments, he became its undisputed leader. "All India is my family."

With Jinnah, the Moslem leader, and Lord Mountbatten, he framed India's independence in 1947, desperately opposing partition into Hindu and Moslem (Pakistan) states. When hideous fighting broke out, he toured the Bengal villages, pleading for an end to bloodshed. At a great prayer meeting in New Delhi, he was assassinated—by a Hindu fanatic who blamed him for India's partition. The irony was as supreme as the injustice.... This skinny, fearless little man was "a moral genius," a triumph of sheer character and will. He sounded the death knell of colonialism. Soon, darkskinned masses in Africa and the Middle East and Mississippi were using their bodies as unprotesting instruments of protest—in marches, boycotts, sit-ins—acting out a Hindu-Christian drama that still disorients the modern world, refuting power with the ageless dream of dignity and freedom blind to color.



# BEN FRANKLIN AND GANDHI

SUSANNE AND LLOYD RUDOLPH

*Susanne and Lloyd Rudolph have successfully combined marriage and children (three under seven years of age) with a professional life that is interlocked and enriched by a mutual field of study, the social and political sciences. Since 1964, the Rudolphs have held faculty positions at the University of Chicago—Lloyd Rudolph as associate professor of political science, and Susanne Rudolph as associate professor of the social sciences and political science in the College, the University of Chicago.*

*On three occasions over the past decade, Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph have done field work in India. From 1962-63, for example, they were senior research scholars in India under a Fulbright fellowship. In addition, from 1964-65, both*

*served with the Peace Corps in Washington, D.C., in anticipation of expanded volunteer programs for India; from 1956-67, they participated in the Foreign Training Program (Indian) of the Ford Foundation. Susanne Rudolph is also a former faculty fellow at the American Institute of Indian Studies.*

*Many of the Rudolphs' scholarly writings and researches have been collaborative and co-authored. Their most recent book, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*, shows in the section on charismatic leadership, how Gandhi was able to regenerate the spirit of a people whose confidence had been weakened under imperial rule. The following excerpt is taken from that book.*

Gandhi approached his public work with the frame of mind of those modernizing men who confront all tasks with the calculation of the metronome and the balance sheet. While Max Weber and contemporary social psychologists associate industriousness and the economizing of time and resources with achievement drives rooted in "Protestant" character, Gandhi came to them through familial and religious socialization in the Vaishnavite and Jain traditions of Gujarat. His life course does not support Weber's belief that "it could not have occurred to a Hindu to prize the rational transformation of the world in accordance with matter-of-fact considerations and to undertake such transfor-

mation as an act of obedience to a divine will." The disposition to work, save, and rationally allocate time and resources in order to realize given goals is not necessarily modern. It appears, for example, among religious orders, both East and West, where self-control and asceticism in the service of spiritual ends find expression, as they did for Gandhi, in strict observance of schedules, hard work at physical, intellectual, or spiritual tasks, and the practice of thrift. Traditional merchant castes, too, such as Gandhi's, the Modh Baniyas, exhibit such psychological dispositions and habits. But it is also true that the elevation of these characteristics to universal virtues is particularly



associated with the emergence of modern entrepreneurship and scientific technology and the expectations they raised that men could master their material and human environment. In the West, the preaching of these characteristics as virtues and attempts systematically to include them into emerging generations through sermons, aphorisms, penny pamphlets and public education began in the eighteenth century and peaked in the nineteenth.

Much in the petty details of Gandhi's life corresponds to the practice of those eighteenth and nineteenth-century figures in Britain and America whose lives and teaching popularized the Protestant ethic and applied technology. Pre-eminent among them in America was Benjamin Franklin. In Poor Richard's Almanac the inventor, peoples's philosopher, and statesman offered practical advice to the modernizing and mobile youth of a bustling, ambitious new nation. Some might boggle at the attempt to bracket Franklin and Gandhi, one a herald, the other a critic, of industrial civilization. At certain fundamental points, indeed, the two men undoubtedly were poles apart. Gandhi would not have enjoyed Parisian life, as did Franklin. And Franklin's attitude was highly instrumental toward the practice of virtue. Gandhi would never have congratulated himself, as Franklin did, by saying: "I cannot boast much success in acquiring the reality of (pridelessness) but I had a good deal with regard to the appearance of it." And Gandhi would have been scandalized by a similar Franklinism: "Nothing (is) so likely to make a man's fortune as virtue." For Franklin, a practical man, moderation—in food, drink, and venery—was a virtue. For Gandhi, a religious who refused to separate means and ends, and found the passions a permanent threat, moderation in these areas of life was a shortfall from virtue. Food should be taken like medicine, privately and sparingly, not for pleasure but to sustain life. Celibacy was too serious to be treated with "moderation." For Franklin, virtue was useful; for Gandhi, it was self-justifying.

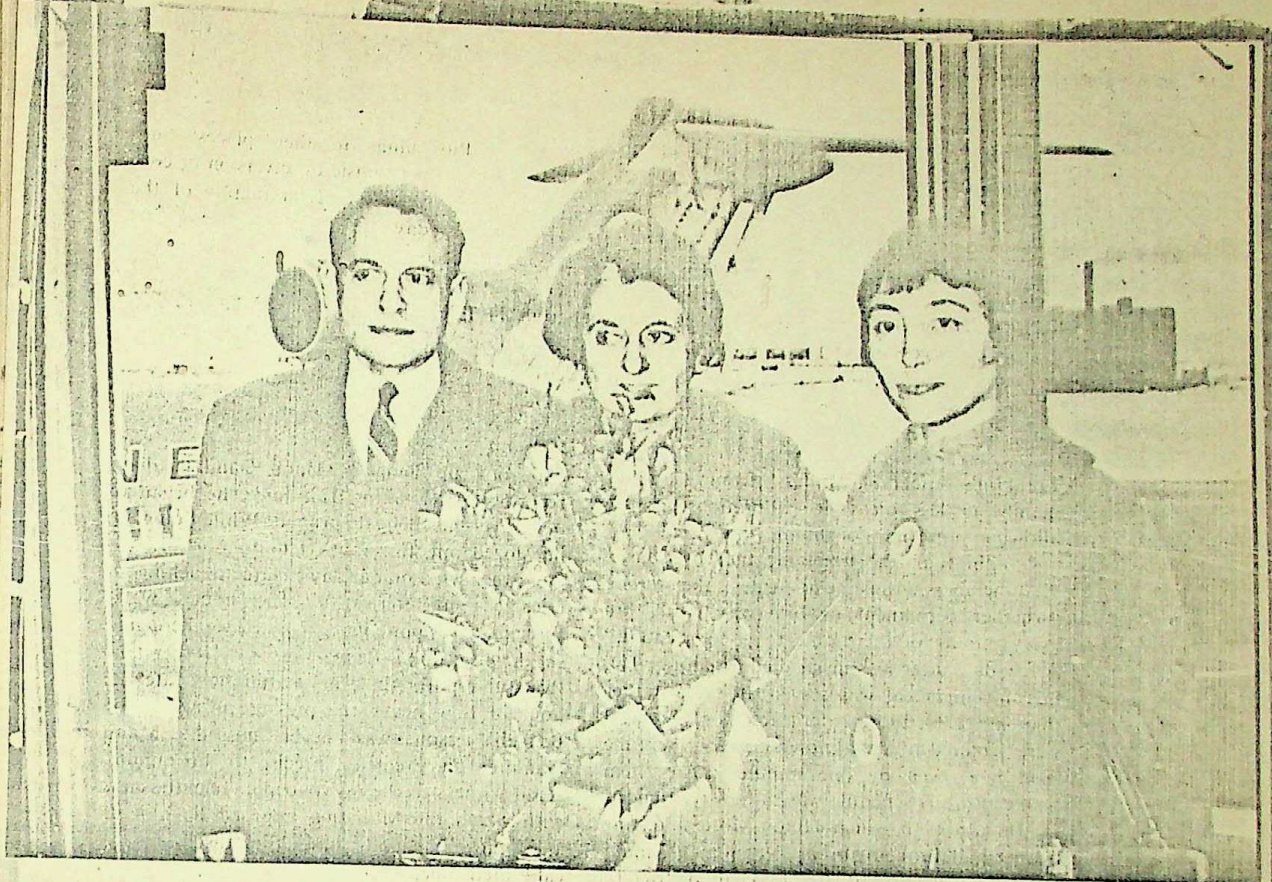
These are important differences, but they should not be allowed to obscure what the two men held in common; by exploring the points of congruence, Gandhi's contribution to Indian modernity can be better understood. Gandhi and Franklin subjected their environment to

rigorous calculations that linked psychic and material expenditures to their returns. And, despite Franklin's contingent view of virtue, they shared a propensity to invest with moral, not merely utilitarian, implications the observance of certain "Protestant" habits. Silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, cleanliness, and chastity are seven of Franklin's virtues about which Gandhi would have been enthusiastic. However differently they viewed their ultimate fate, neither man proposed to let the control and mastery of his worldly environment escape him.

It is no accident that a large watch was among the few effects Gandhi valued in his lifetime and left behind at his death. Gandhi was extremely meticulous about time, as it was measured by the clock, the more so as he found a good many of those about him indifferent to its compulsions. He employed his watch as a species of tyrant to regulate his own affairs and the lives of those associated with him. Arrivals and departures frequently were crises; Gandhi considered the normal practice of great public figures, to keep their audience waiting, a transgression. Many were the arrangement committees and colleagues whom he upbraided for failures on this score. Introducing the venerable B. G. Tilak, who was late, to a conference in 1917, Gandhi remarked: "I am not responsible for his being late. We demand *swaraj*. If one does not mind arriving late by threequarters of an hour at a conference summoned for the purpose, one should not mind if *swaraj* too comes correspondingly late." Once, in his earlier work in 1917 among indigo workers in Bihar, when it became apparent that a decision to move himself and his co-workers would not be carried out by the end of the appointed day, he picked up his bedroll at ten o'clock at night and began to move his effects. His associates, for the most part from the upper castes and classes and accustomed to be waited on by servants and to adjust to their inefficiencies, were obliged willy nilly to move themselves also.

The timetable he blocked out for his first Indian *ashram* is faithful to his own schedule and recalls a similar affection for orderly schedules in Franklin. Their respective schedules read as follows:





The Lloyd Rudolphs with Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

<i>Gandhi</i>			<i>Franklin</i>		
4	a.m.	Rising from bed	5	Rise, wash and address <i>Powerful</i>	
4.15 to 4.45	„	Morning prayer	6	<i>Goodness!</i> Contrive day's business, and take the resolution of the day; prosecute the present study and breakfast	
5	to 6.10	„ Bath, exercise, study	7		
6.10 to 6.30	„	Breakfast	8	Work	
6.30 to 7	„	Women's prayer class	9		
7	to 10.30	Body labor, education, and sanitation	10		
10.45 to 11.15	„	Dinner	11		
12	to 4.30 p.m.	Body labor, including classes	12	Read, or overlook my accounts, and dine	
			1		
			2	Work	
			3		
			4		
			5		



4.30 to 5.30	„	Recreation	6	Put things in their places. Sup-
5.30 to 6	„	Supper	7	per, music or diversion or con-
6 to 7	„	Recreation	8	versation. Examination of the
7 to 7.30	„	Common worship	9	day
7.30 to 9	„	Recreation	10	Sleep
9	„	Retiring bell		

Note: These hours are subject to change whenever necessary.

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Franklin's timetable differs from Gandhi's mainly in less picayune calibrations and in allowing more time for dining.

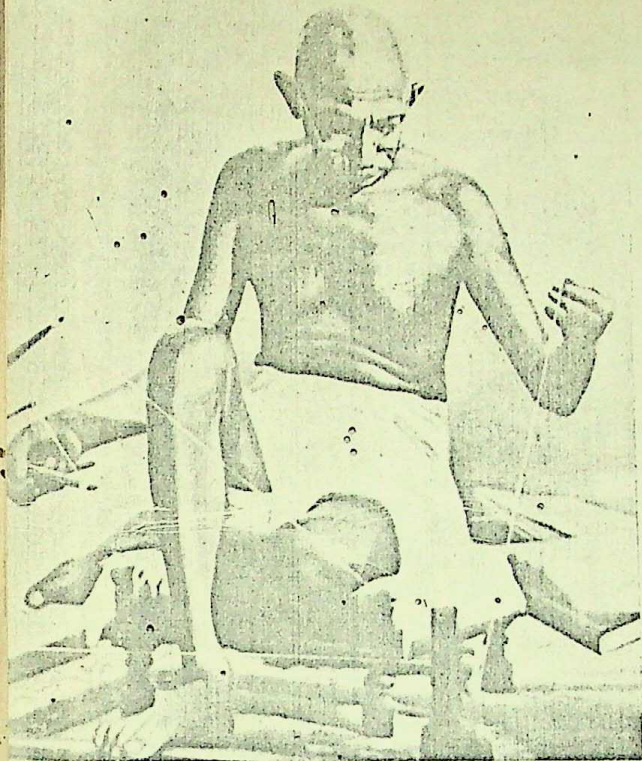
Gandhi took the timetable most seriously: "All members," runs the first rule of the *ashram*, "whether permanent or otherwise, will turn every minute of their time to good account." A few days after Kasturbai died in jail in 1944, his morning meal was served at 11.45 rather than at 11.30; those responsible for the meal were lectured: "You know she never sent me food late, even by one minute." Any item included in his schedule was ruthlessly attended to. In late 1946, when Hindu-Moslem disturbances had broken out in Bengal and Gandhi at seventyseven went to Noakhali district to try to restore peace, he began his day at 2.30

and took up Bengali. Manu Gandhi's diary records: After taking fruit juice, he began to pore over his Bengali primer. While doing so, he dozed off for about ten minutes.... At 7.25 we started on our day's march, reaching... at 8.25 a.m. after a full one hour's walk. Immediately upon his arrival there, he again sat down to do his Bengali lesson. His secretary Pyarelal reports that, no matter how late the hour or how heavy the pressure of work, the Bengali lesson was never missed. Manu Gandhi's diary entries, precise to the minute, stand witness to the microscopic relentlessness with which the Mahatma imposed on himself and those around him the discipline of calibrated time.

We can only win over the opponent by love, never by hate. Hate is the subtlest form of violence. . . . Hatred injures the hater, never the hated.

- Gandhi





Western nations are groaning today under the heel of the monster god materialism. Their moral growth has become stunted. They measure their growth in dollars. . . . American wealth has become the standard, rather than truth, kindness, generosity, love, sensitivity, and sharing the experiences of life freely and fully.

—Gandhi



american tributes  
to Gandhi  
1950-69



Mahatma Gandhi once advised us always to assume in our opponents the highest motives capable of explaining their actions. This was not goody-goody advice but hard political sense.

—Stringfellow Barr (1897—)  
American educator, writer,  
historian.

## TRIBUTES

In the summer of 1953, I had the rare good fortune to discuss with Jawaharlal Nehru some of the implications of the Gandhian *Satyagraha*. He spoke with me, not as the Prime Minister of a great State, but as one who had "grown up in this strange complex of ideas and action which Gandhi let loose in India." He went on to express to me the difficulties which Indians have in viewing objectively the Gandhian experiments—Indians have been too close to the greatness of the man to view his works dispassionately. The Westerner who has the temerity to undertake the task of interpreting Gandhian thought can perhaps best do so by searching for its meaning in terms familiar to the West. At least, so it has seemed to this Westerner whose basic predispositions are rationalist and humanist and who shares with some of Gandhi's severest critics an abiding suspicion of religious systems and of obscurantist approaches. It is the unsystematized and often inconsistent jungle of Gandhi's writings that makes it difficult but tempting to others to formulate a "Gandhian Philosophy."...

Those who would explore further may have an interest in the words penned by Jawaharlal Nehru at a time when, truly, he was pressed by the searching, weighty problems which beset the statesman. As he wrote to me a few days after our brief discussion, he had stolen the moments to set down these thoughts because he wished that people might be brought to understand Gandhi's ideas about *satyagraha*. The following paragraphs were addressed to my original manuscript, "Gandhian *Satyagraha* and Political Theory: an Interpretation." "To many of us," he wrote, "it is not a new field..."

We were hardly in a position to exercise

a dispassionate judgment about them, for we ourselves became integral parts of these processes which changed us as individuals and changed the history of India. And yet, in some ways we were entitled to a hearing and our views may have some value, though they might not be expressed in the language of the scholar. We were not only intellectually in touch with these dynamic ideas but were emotionally aware of many things, which cannot easily be analysed or put down on paper. It is nearly three and a half decades now that I first came in contact with his strange personality and his strange ideas. The effect was almost instantaneous, as if an electric shock went through the system. And yet, the shock was a soothing and, at the same time, an enlivening one. The mind struggled with these new ideas often put out without much method or logic. But the whole system reacted to them and grew under their impress.

Was it the personality of Gandhi that did this or the force of the ideas that he represented and that he translated into action? Was it the rare spectacle of a man whose thought and word and act were so closely correlated as to form one integrated whole?

The man has gone, though he lives vividly in the memory of those who knew him, and innumerable legends have grown up about him. The story of his deeds has become a part of the history of India. Many people swear by his name and exploit it for base purposes. The noble doctrine of *satyagraha* is debased and used for wrong ends.

I suppose all this is inevitable. The truth or reality in the idea that he



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Buddhism and Jainism nor yet tolerated like Sikhism and Christianity, and neither did Islam in India fuse into its sub-culture the traditional Hindu symbols, idioms and myths as the Indonesian Muslims have done with conspicuous success.

The communal form given to Hinduism in modern times is alien to its traditional basis, which is the caste-system. British laws, reform movements like the Arya Samaj, fear of Muslim communal cohesion and the handiwork of politically-communal Hindu leadership, combined to achieve a form which has no sanction in the tradition. Communalism, as an articulation and communication pattern in India, grew as a result firstly of the deliberate fragmentation of politics into communal 'enclosures' by the unfolding of the British political 'reforms' appertaining to communal representation and separate elections to local, State and Central bodies and, secondly, by the development and concentration of political power centres in the expanding urban areas, where the consciousness of belonging to a community was more prominent than caste consciousness (with the possible exception of Madras and Kerala) of any other significant in-group feeling. In half-a-century of urban-based political manoeuvres, communalism emerged as a focal point of rallying people belonging to the same religion and as a dominant idiom of political bargaining for the (supposed) fulfilment of their basic demands.

Yet, simultaneous with the growth of communal orientation in Indian politics we also observe the coming into being of an antithetical corrective trend of nationalist secular politics committed to the unity of the nation and its democratization. In the final round of the struggle for independence, the main tussle was between the forces of secular-nationalist politics and the forces of communal-separatist politics. It was a draw of a sort under the pain of partition of country, with the separatists congregating in Pakistan, at the crest of power, and the nationalists left over in India. This explains quite a bit of the policy differentiation, domestic and international, between the two countries.

In conclusion it may be stated that Secularism in India is both an ideal and a reality. It is evident that in many ways we are far from the realisation of the ideal. But it is equally apparent that there is a national consensus for the steady realisation of secularism as an operative principal of national politics. Secularism in India is an evolving reality through an agonising process of democratic nation-building but then that is probably also true of the other major ideals before the country.

Both as an instrument of modernised nation-building and as a process of social change Secularism has at least three dimensions: (i) as a process of inter-communal political integration (as between religion based segments like Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, etc.); (ii) as a process of intra-community transformation of the dominant caste-based community, viz., the Hindu; and (iii) as the idiom, method and direction of general change in order to promote scientific culture and rationalist temper in the country.

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SECULAR DEMOCRACY



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Hindus and Muslims in the undivided India constitute parallel nations, and therefore by that token, however they are in a majority they should constitute themselves into separate sovereign states. Hence Pakistan—the Muslim majority area of undivided India.

To begin with there were three fallacies in this argument.

- (a) Religion alone, to the exclusion of other factors is not, and has never been the basis of nationalism and nationhood.
- (b) If all the Muslims in undivided India constituted a single nation then the residual Muslims in India (and Hindus in Pakistan) after partition, could only have been either 'aliens' with no right to the potential citizenship of Pakistan (or India in the case of Hindus), or 'national minorities'—capable of full and equal participation in the politics, laws and statecraft.
- (c) If the demands of the so-called Muslim nationalism could be satisfied only by the formation of an independent state in regions which were anyhow Muslim majority areas—East Bengal, Punjab, N.W.F.P., Sindh and Baluchistan—then why should it not be considered essentially as a regional and not a religious means where employed for regional ends?

Now, how the emergence of Bangla Desh has shaken the notion of 'one-nation' as well?

From the polemical stand-point it can be argued that assuming 'state' is co-terminous with a 'nation' then if, Bangla Desh has proved that the 'two-nation' theory is false by the fact of its separation from Pakistan, then it is similarly arguable that precisely by declaring independence from both India and Pakistan, Bangla Desh has further demonstrated that they are not only a separate nation from Pakistan but also from India, and that in the sub-continent there are at least three Nations: India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh. But if 'nation' is not co-terminous with a 'state' (as indeed it is not, for Arabs are a nation divided into 18 sovereign states, and Soviet Union is a State enclosing many Nationalities, and surely all the 38 States in Africa are not nation-states), then three alternative models are possible:

- (a) either the whole sub-continent is to be presumed to be a nation—may be with the obvious exclusion of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and one might add Ceylon; or
- (b) that there are homogeneous groups identified by well-known factors determining a nation like language, culture, social mores, psychological makeup, economic pattern, religion and beliefs, etc., in which no single factor but a combination of factors is decisive and hence one can identify (for example, a Bengali 'Nation', a Pathan 'Nation', a Tamil 'Nation', etc., divided in this case respectively between Bangla Desh and India, Pakistan and Afghanistan and India and Ceylon), or
- (c) the term 'nation' is either too restrictive or too amorphous in the context of the sub-continental reality and sociological groupings; therefore, it is better to abandon this concept and to speak instead in terms of federal-building of

'groups' and segments' constituted discreetly on the basis of language, culture, region, religion, etc.

But the point, however, is made that in each of the three alternative models, and above all by the fact of the formation of a separate and sovereign Bangla Desh the One-Nation thesis has also been rudely shaken if not exploded.

The valid conclusion to be drawn from the above argument is that the concept of nation is too inadequate to explain and reflect the political aggregation of India. The process of what is called nation-building in India is really an euphemism for the building of a cohesive federal polity. Indeed this has been the experience of Switzerland, though on a smaller scale and with stronger elements of decentralization due to its virtual confederal structure. Similar is also the experience of the Soviet Union though on a continental scale and within the framework of a rigidly ideologically-oriented one-party political system and a constitutional structure which obviously has features and aspects quite different from the political system of India.

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BUT let us revert back to the main theme. Since the main referents of communalism in India are Hindus and Muslims (each for the other, and both for the secularists) it will be futile, however, to gloss over the historical implications that during the thousand years of their co-existence in India Islam and Hinduism grew as exclusive entities resulting in the creation of what Panikkar called 'two parallel societies'. Symbiosis rather than synthesis was achieved. It is true that by the fact of even this parallel living many points of accord and fringe accommodations were reached, but nothing similar to either Muslim-Christian fusion in Arab nationalism or Buddhist-Shinto reconciliation in Japanese nationalism occurred in India, despite the fact of the Hindu origin of the bulk of its Muslim population. In the course of its encounter with Islam, coming as it did on the crest of political power with a defined world outlook and principles of social reconstruction, it was not possible for the doctrinally amorphous, socially segmented and politically dispersed and weak Hinduism to overthrow the emerging Muslim society in the Indian setting. Nor was it possible for Islam to uproot the Hindu society, continental in dimension and embedded as it was too deeply, and for a millennia, into the cultural traditions and agro-craft economy of the country, thereby becoming an integral part of its ethos and identity.

Due to its total rejection of Hindu religions and because of its mercantile and quasi-urban character, Islam could not reach the recesses of rural India comprising thousands of closed villages, which as Marx put it had transformed a self-developing social State, into never-changing natural destiny.

Seven hundred years of rule by Muslim sovereigns in many parts of the country as also almost continuously from the imperial capital of Delhi, did not lead to Islamization of India, as for instance of Zoroastrian Persia, Coptic Egypt, Christian Albania and the pagan Turks. Nor was Islam violently overthrown as from Spain or absorbed in the Hindu pantheon like



# A STATESMAN OF PEACE

FREDERICK BOHN FISHER

I first met Gandhi in 1917. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were then making ferment all over India; and Gandhi was just emerging into dominating national leadership. I conceived an immediate admiration for this amazing statesman of the new East, and that admiration has ripened through the years into friendship.

I last heard his voice over the trans-Atlantic telephone while he was in London this year at the Indian Round Table Conference. It was the same clear, vibrant voice. I could feel his warm personality across the three thousand miles of ocean and air. We talked for ten minutes about his health, his cause, the invitation to America, and his soul-call back to India. When he hung up the receiver he said, "I have been participating in a miracle," and then rushed off to a dinner with Lady Astor. He has been participating in a miracle, for forty years—ever since his mature call to human service. His very life is a miracle to those of us who know him best.

India has been my home. Twentyeight years ago I settled in Agra, the city of the Taj Mahal. Ever since then, I have gone back and forth between the East and West, and resided for a decade from 1920 to 1930 in Calcutta. I have had opportunity, therefore, to view each civilization not only by familiar acquaintance, but through the necessary perspective of distance and comparison. In politics I am pro-Indian but not anti-British; in religion a Christian, but not anti-Hindu nor anti-Moslem.

In presenting Indian problems as related to the Mahatma's life and work, I seek deliberately to view them through his eyes. Literature abounds giving the Anglo-Saxon bias, tone and argu-

ment. I try to turn Anglo-Saxon around and reveal us to ourselves as the new-awakened, aggressive Indian patriots see us. . . .

I use Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi as a telescope through which to view this balancing of force because he is, without controversy, the outstanding personality of the new East. Without him India, in fact the whole modern Orient, is like France without Napoleon, like America without Lincoln. I shall have failed in my purpose if I do not make you see behind the statesman, or politician, or ascetic, if you wish, Gandhi the man, the living, breathing, loving, serving, repenting, triumphant, Gandhi, who is my friend.

"Gandhiji! Gandhi the Beloved! Mahatma! The Great Soul of India!"

Like the sigh of a great wind this name swept over the white-capped thousands as I rode on the train one day with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi towards Calcutta. No word of his coming had been allowed over the Government owned wires for fear of an uprising. Yet the curious grapevine telegraphy of India, ancient and mysterious, knows no censor. At every station I saw the human seas overflow our train. Ladders of breathing and sobbing bodies were made so that the lucky ones might climb to touch . . . or merely to see the Mahatma. Rose-petals covered our engine. Peasants stopped their bullocks in the fields and bowed in prayer as the holy train swept by. Every pole, fence, and hillock had its burden of worshippers. Why? Not for a little brown man spinning out his day of silence. The soul of India worship-



ping not Gandhi, the man, nor merely Gandhi, the patriot, but Gandhi the Indian ideal... the hero who had turned moral force into a weapon, a weapon at once spiritual and political.

What a strange contradiction Gandhi is, then! In India a god, in England and America a cartoon. Newspaper pictures reveal him ugly, emaciated, toothless. The Western world is bewildered at his power. We see in him a thin little brown man, walking on foot to the hundred million dollar palace of the Viceroy of India. We of the West look at this human god of the East, clutching his black umbrella, and say contemptuously, "Why, he is only a naked little man!"

Yet not so long ago this naked statesman came out of the Viceroy's palace with the fate of the British Empire balanced in his bony fingers.

"What is his secret?" hundreds have asked me since I came home from twenty-eight years of contact with India. "He was your friend when he was plain Mr. Gandhi. Is he a saint or a fool? Is he a fanatic or a statesman? Does he for one moment dream that he can buck a machine-made civilization? That he can upset the world?"

That is exactly what Gandhi is doing... upsetting a world, a materialistic world, enthroned upon a preconceived right to rule by force of arms. He is succeeding not because he is a god, but because he is the man for the moment. There are many great leaders who never come to full authority or power because the time for their particular contribution to society is not yet come. The man may be right or the moment may be right; but it is only when the two cojoin that an hour of history is struck. Henry Ford would never have made his millions (which are valuable only as so much canned power) if he had been born fifty years sooner or later than he was. Gandhi epitomizes the post-war idealism. Yet he is pre-eminently practical, as our age is practical. This naked little Indian is even what the Scotch call canny... wise in the psychology of people. For he understands both the brown man and the white.

I remember one afternoon in Calcutta, during the session of the National Congress, how my hand reached out instinctively to grasp his in responsive emotion as he sat calmly addressing the great assembly in words of truth too big to be limited to one race.

I knew the genesis of this speech, for I had

spent a weekend with him when we were both the guests of that regal host Rabindranath Tagore. Circumstances could scarcely have been more perfect for analyzing the contrasting personalities of these two giants. It is not easy to analyze the character of our friends. Gandhi has become a worldwide name; and Tagore is a fixed literary star of the first magnitude; I can only respond to an inner urge to reveal what I put in my notebook during those days.

The time was September; the heavy monsoons were over; and the earth was bursting into fresh green life. It was easy in this tropical beauty to get up with the sun. I knew Gandhi's habits; so I ate my *chhoti hazri* (breakfast) at sun-up. Knowing also the leisurely habits of Tagore, we did not venture into his drawing-room for conversation until mid-morning. The shade of his porch was welcome; it was more of a Roman porch than a room, open on all four sides; the bedrooms, kitchen, and the poet's study having a loose masonry connection with the four corners. Steps led down from each side into the fragrant garden. Beyond were mango groves, sal trees, and the old marble prayer bench that his father had used before him.

Gandhi was ready for conversation. He sleeps only a few hours, and his early morning meditations made him eager for active life. He and I walked up the terracotta steps, removed our shoes, and sat down cross-legged just as our host entered in his ample flowing robes. His ideas were just as ample and just as flowing. We talked of gods and men, empires and democracies, poetry and history, East and West. Tagore led the way, steering clear of details and launching out into the wider paths.

Gandhi was silent for a long time. Charlie Andrews and I spoke very little. After a while Gandhi's passionate eyes began to gleam. We had come over into the realm of social injustices, politics, poverty, struggle. Tagore had seemed like a mountain. Gandhi leaped forth like a gushing cataract, pouring out his very life's blood as though upon an altar of his people. Every word was carefully chosen. Every gesture was deliberate. His body was well poised, but his eyes seemed like flashes of fire, and his lips were burning coals. Never did I see more clearly in any personality such absorbing love for men, and I have seldom heard more refreshingly scientific and practical suggestions for social improve-



ment and growth. He had been planning his opening speech for the National Congress, and I knew it would be a great one. He crouched there against the wall, a picture of passionate patriotism, consumed by his spirit till his very body dwindled and left only—a soul—the soul of India....

It may at first glance seem startling that out of the supposedly backward nation of India should have come this championship of a new way of conquest: the heroic wielding of idealism as a sword...or more properly, as a machine gun. For there is nothing antiquated about Gandhi. He is as modern as each new morning and yet as old as time. And in this apparent anachronism lies his power.

Gandhi has taken the highest ideals of the Christian West, which we have not cared or dared to practise, and turned them against us in a new statesmanship of moral force, which is more powerful against us, doubtless, because it forged from our own yearnings. His power is that in the one nation most fitted for his kind of religious and political experiment, at the exact instant when a war-torn chaotic world was thirsty for a new way of life...at this psychological place and moment, he has made our visionary ideal practical and has hitched it to his cart. For he believes that love, indeed, shall rule the world. What is more, he has proved that, at least for a time, moral force can defeat machine guns.

That love can conquer the world is no new idea...it is as old as Buddha. But up to now it has been a moral conquest through the force of the spirit, a victory that had little to do with organised earthly power. When Jesus promised that the meek should inherit the earth, he did not mean that they should all become millionaires and kings.

Yet Gandhi is using the force of moral resistance as a political and an economic weapon, proving the power of directed spiritual force as practically potent to win battles against navies and armies. He is not a peace fanatic fed only upon goat's milk and impossible ideals. In the negative sense of the word he is not a pacifist at all...he is a fighter; but a fighter who will not shed blood. He knew war before he knew peace. For forty years he backed the mailed arm of the British Empire. He was a stretcher bearer in the Boer War in Africa. He was at

the front during the "Zulu rebellion" (the quotation marks are his, for now he asks, can a country rebel when the land is theirs by right of birth?) He recruited Indian troops for England during the World War which he, like many a Westerner, was deluded into believing to be a war to end war. He is no brown-faced, white-livered ascetic. He has turned from a war of steel because he thinks it is no longer practical, and because he has seen enough of the scattering of men's bowels in the trenches of modern murder. Here is a man who is not afraid to face down his mistake.

"Confession of errors," says Gandhi, "is like a broom which sweeps away the dirt and leaves the surface brighter and cleaner. I feel stronger for confession."

Is it any wonder that the old school of international diplomacy finds itself dumb before a man as simple as that?

Whether Gandhi wins or loses immediate political freedom for his people, whether he rises to great power or is crushed in the maw of materialism is not the only vitally important issue in his bold campaign. India will achieve political autonomy eventually, whether it be by sword or passive resistance. Gandhi is more than a national Indian patriot; he is the personification of a new era.

"Civilization," says Gandhi, "is the conquest of one's mind and passions. We can conquer our enemy without hating him. Moral force is not idealistically but actually greater than navies."

This is a new idea in international statesmanship.

In each new epoch there is always a man who personifies the peculiar spirit of the age. Usually he is the fruit of seeds planted generations previously in the national life, waiting for the proper crisis to provide the climate for full fruition. Sometimes a whole continent is set aside to work out new ideals of civilization as North America, hemmed in by her sunrise and sunset seas, awaited the sowing of the seeds of political and religious freedom and the flowering of the lusty plant of representative democracy. So the Indian nation has patiently waited its day of blossoming.

Ancient India planted *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and reaped Gandhi. He was born in spirit six



thousand years ago when the history of the Aryan race began. Many people do not know that the majority of the present Indians, though burned brown by ten thousand suns, are Aryans of the same stock as the Anglo-Saxons. The traditional outcastes in India, the former Dravidians, were Negroid in origin. The fact that intermarriage has been largely prevented by the caste system has kept these brown Aryans singularly pure in stock.

Gandhi got his practical understanding of *ahimsa* from his mother. His parents were Banias, the puritans of Hinduism, who held strongly to this particular doctrine of harmlessness.

I can still feel the silent awe with which I listened to his boyhood story of a deadly scorpion that ran across the floor of the living-room where his mother was teaching the children their Hindu Sunday school lesson, so to speak. His mother's feet were bare, with red-painted soles. She followed the interesting Hindu custom of rouging them each morning after early devotions, in order to carry with her at her daily tasks, the pleasant odour and beauty of her prayers. As young Mohandas saw the deadly scorpion running straight towards those beautiful painted feet, he cried out in alarm,

"Mother! A scorpion! It will bite you! Kill it!"

His mother said quietly, "Be still, my son. If you do not frighten it, I shall not be hurt."

She watched the insect crawl up upon her heel, and then slowly disengaging the silk scarf from about her shoulders, she reached down, picked up the scorpion, and dropped it out of the window.

"Now it will neither harm me, nor I it," she remarked gently.

Lessons like this, coming from no printed page, but from the book of life, influenced the future life of a discerning boy. This gentle puritan mother was one of the biggest factors in making Gandhi what he is today, a prophet of self-mastery, of national control through control of self. Over and over again he has said to his people that a nation whose citizens have not learned self-control, cannot rule itself as a national entity. This is a startling political theory. Upon that basis which of the white nations in either Europe or America is fitted for full self-government?

Gandhi's attitude towards the West partakes of the same attitude his mother had towards

the scorpion. He knows the white world would bite, if he struck at it. Therein lies his astute, practical statesmanship. He does not try to use violence. That, we could understand and cope with. He uses a silk scarf against us... gentle ruthlessness against a sword. He drops us, figuratively speaking, out of the window, by refusing to cooperate with white rulers; and says to the English, and through them to the Western world:

"Go your own way. Live your own life... but we Indians don't want you endangering our living-room. I don't want to kill you. Don't you kill me. But if you must kill me, I will be true, even in death, to what I believe."

Or, as his lawyer training fits him to do, Gandhi might in a flash turn this incident around and say in his gentle but pointed sarcasm to a nearby Englishman,

"If you would be happier to have us Indians play the part of the scorpion in the story, imagining yourself the mother nation, then develop poise and wisdom enough not to strike us in fear before we strike you. Just get up deliberately and shake us out of the window! That's all we want, our freedom!"

Then he would give his little chuckling laugh which I always love to hear, and say gently, "But after all, nobody's a scorpion. You're not. We're not."

It is partly this human ability to put himself in the other man's place and see his virtues as well as his vices, to see behind the aggressive Englishman and the erring Indian the true ideal for which each stands, that gives Gandhi his power as a statesman. His mind is not set in one permanent mould; it is fluid, ready to run into new channels as they open up. He has the adaptable power of the opportunist so necessary to successful statesmanship; he has the vision to forge harmlessness into passive resistance, the one anchor by which he could hold India. It was this same quality that gave him the shrewdness to recognize that in the innate idealism of the English race he had one of his greatest weapons for obtaining Indian freedom. He held a two-edged sword, and wielded it effectively.

This was not India's first experiment in the rule of peace. Two hundred years before Christ and two hundred years after Buddha, the Emperor Asoka had built and established an empire



identical in geographical extent with modern India. He had built up his power by the sword; but the sight of the blood-stained battlefield of Kalinga had turned him to peace. He adopted the pacific policies of Buddha so thoroughly that he scrapped his armies, threw away his swords and spears, and ruled for forty years through the nonviolent power of love. After that Asoka's only army was composed of Buddhist priests who spread Buddhism in Burma, Tibet, Ceylon, China, Korea, Japan and portions of Asia Minor; an army of indefatigable idealists whose influence is felt, even yet, around in the world.

But Gandhi brought back from Africa an aggressive, militant pacifism adapted to this modern day. It was the old Hindu and Buddhist ideal of *ahimsa*, of suffering, yet doing no harm to any living being. It was more. Ancient *ahimsa* was negative. Gandhi's *ahimsa* was a positive, aggressive, political weapon. "Insist upon truth by loving argument, by the testimony of your own life. Once you are assured of the truth, refuse to recant, even to death!" This was Gandhi of India. Harmlessness, plus insistence upon the truth did not make a bullet-proof combination... but it defeated the British that day at Bombay.

Gandhi, contrary to popular Western belief, is no visionary counselling cowardice, and cringing submission to the will of another. "Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I advise violence," he says. "I cultivate the quiet courage of dying without killing, but to him who has not this courage, I advise that of killing and of being killed, rather than that of shamefully fleeing from danger. For he who runs away commits mental violence. He runs away because he has not the courage to be killed while he kills. I would risk violence a thousand times rather than emasculation of the race. I would rather have India resort to arms to defend her honor than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless victim to her own dishonor.

"But I believe that nonviolence is infinitely superior to violence—forgiveness more manly than punishment. Abstinence from violence is forgiveness only when there is power to punish. It is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature. A mouse cannot forgive a cat for eating it. I do not believe India to

be helpless. Nonviolence does not mean meek submission to the will of the evildoer, but the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust Empire and lay the foundation for that Empire's fall or its regeneration."

Gandhi knew war. I have heard from his lips the most graphic descriptions of battlefields, troops, spoils, victories, and defeats. He had proved himself no coward. He refused from principle to carry arms, but he had carried a stretcher through the thick of the fighting during the Boer War when the Englishman was fighting the Boer. Also during the Zulu rebellion, when the white man was fighting the black, Gandhi often walked twenty to thirty miles a day under the blazing sun of Africa, carrying the wounded, patching up the destruction that war had made. He knew the cold singing of bullets, the scream of the dying. He had received the Kaiser-i-Hind medal, and other honors from the British Government for his African services. He had been in England at the outbreak of the war. But somewhere amid the silences of the African night, he had come to the conclusion that war was wrong; it took human life; besides it did not pay; it was futile. The outcome of the European war confirmed this belief.

"War does not even help the victor," Gandhi decided. "It makes him brutal and proud; nothing is added to his culture, or even to his gold. All he has left is debts and empty homes. And war certainly does not aid the loser. He is resentful, filled with the bitter meat of hatred, developing a slave mentality and an incapacity to overcome his environment. He has lost the will to live and win. Of what practical value, then, is war?"

The reason most movements for peace in the past have failed is because they have had no practical plan of procedure. Gandhi realized that unorganized goodwill cannot stand up against "disciplined violence" as he called war, and have a ghost of a chance of winning. So he set about organizing his peaceful army. He must meet organized brute force with organized soul force.

He must have officers for this army, trained in the essential weapons of self-control and



endurance under all provocation. To train such leaders Gandhi took young men and women... for women were as important passive resisters as men; when it came to endurance they were already past-masters of the art... into his new *ashram* at Ahmedabad. It was in 1916 that he settled in Ahmedabad and established the *ashram*. An *ashram* is a community home—a place to seek the truth. He developed a library of many books. Regular classes were held, somewhat after the manner of the old Greek gymnasium school, with sociology, economics, politics and religion emphasized. There was an eight-fold vow that all students had to take:

First—truthfulness

Second—nonviolence

Third—celibacy

Fourth—control of the palate

Fifth—non-stealing

Sixth—non-possession—that

is, giving up all desires of possessing things.

Seventh—*swadeshi*—that is, using home-grown, home manufactured goods, and being loyal to one's own inherited culture, developing it from within, instead of becoming foreign.

Eighth—fearlessness.

These young officers in the army of passive resistance then went out into all parts of the country, travelling third class, living on whatever small amounts the communities chose to give them, and taught the Indian villagers what *satyagraha*, the pursuit of truth by nonviolent measures, really meant. These Indian villages and the groups that gathered at universities and in cities were the training camps of the battalions of passive resistance. It was this training that made possible the battle of Bombay, and the successful boycott of British goods.

In August 1920 the noncooperation movement was really launched on a national scale, with an appeal to every Indian to enter into this programme as if this had been a war of arms instead of wills and of ideals. The will to Indian freedom was to be pushed forward by the force of truth. These new-soldiers of passive resistance would not kill anyone to attain their end, but would allow themselves to be killed, if need be.

"We do not want to sacrifice the life of a single person to end British rule in India," said Gandhi. "But the Indians are willing that the holy Ganges should run red with blood (Indian

blood) if this is necessary to gain them freedom so long unjustly delayed." This was the new fighting pacifism.

These were the weapons with which this new nonviolent soldier would fight. The Indian Congress manifesto of 1920 advised as means of noncooperation the following definite things:

1. The surrender of all titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in the local government bodies.
2. Refusal to attend government receptions or levees, durbars, and other official and semi-official functions, held by government officials, or in their honor.
3. Gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by government, and in place of such schools and colleges, the establishment of national schools and colleges in the various provinces.
4. Gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants, and establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid for the settlement of private disputes.
5. Refusal on the part of the military, clerical, and laboring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia or any other place.
6. Withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the reformed councils, and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election.
7. The boycott of foreign goods, especially everything that is British-made.

The boycott of British goods was the "Big Bertha" of the passive resistance campaign; it all but stunned the British into defeat. Add to this the refusal of the passive resisters to pay taxes to hold office under the government, to keep British honors or souvenirs of war; in addition, pile up the women's surprisingly successful picketing of the liquor shops and of opium selling, where educated women of the leading families of India endured insults as they blocked the auction of government licenses. Here are weapons not to be despised.

Gandhi's defence of his use of this economic weapon was typically reasonable. He claimed that since the British government refused India the right to an autonomous government, either within or without the Empire, India had the



right to set up an internal national policy of its own. "The boycott," said Gandhi, "is merely India's tariff to protect her own native industries ... as America for example, protects her manufactures." The boycott then, was a tariff such as any country—France or America—might raise against another country in self protection. The boycott method was made necessary because the Indians were given no legislative function.

But Gandhi did not stop there. To refuse to buy British cloth was not enough. India must herself develop her own industries so that she would not be dependent upon any foreign nation whatever. He got down the spinning wheel out of the Indian attics, at about the same time that our antique dealers were pulling American revolutionary spinning wheels out of the attics of New England. But the spinning wheel in India was no relic. It was a present need. And soon the very Himalayas began to echo back the whirr of patriotic Indian spinning. Here again Gandhi had vindicated his claim to being a practical idealist.

Anyone who is not prepared to capitulate to Gandhi had better stay away from him. The power of his personality, the fire in his great brown eyes, his innate dignity, draw you, irresistibly. You forget yourself; you forget Gandhi as a man. His deep voice carries to you his message only. It is because he has sunk himself so deeply in his ideal, that he has lost all self-consciousness; and therefore is greater than

his puny body. I have known men to say, "I hate him. I despise everything for which he stands!" And then I have greeted them as they came away from Gandhi, murmuring, "I was mistaken!" Love him, or hate him, if you can ... you cannot ignore him. He remains unique.

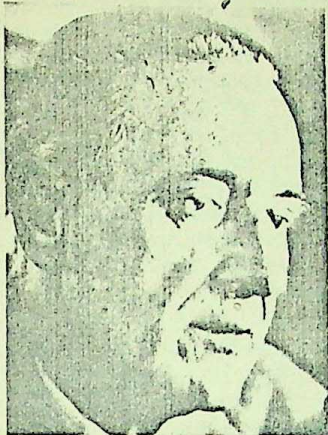
"I haven't known much about America," Gandhi said to me as I sat down beside him. "I had been taught by my English friends to believe that the United States is not a real democracy. But Woodrow Wilson sounds like a true democrat and great statesman. He fascinates us Indians. While I have been supporting the British Empire in this war to end war, I have admired Wilson for being 'too proud to fight.' My very principles of life call out to him ... for I too do not believe in taking human life, any life. But now that he has brought you into the war, perhaps we are not all wrong."

Gandhi later changed his mind ... as Wilson might have done had he lived to see our modern chaos. Gandhi decided that war as a means of settling international disputes was useless. The only thing that could bring peace was an insistence upon peaceful methods. We must organize for peace as we had for war, every man, woman and child; we must build up a public opinion for passive resistance so strong that machine guns could not shatter it. India had gone a step farther, but the influence of American ideals remained in the Gandhi movement.



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## MR. GANDHI

JOHN GUNTHER

A British critic once called John Gunther, political journalist and foreign correspondent, "Surveyor-General of the Universe." From 1922-1936, Mr. Gunther served as European correspondent for the Chicago Daily News. *Inside Europe*, published in 1935, (now in its 70th printing) became the first in a series of *Inside* books by John Gunther, dealing with the viscera of the major continents in an immensely readable and lively manner. In 1936, Mr. Gunther resigned from the Daily News to become a freelance writer. From 1937 to 1938, he traveled widely in Japan, China, India and other parts of Asia, writing articles and gathering material for his second *Inside* book—*Inside Asia*. The other books which followed: *Inside Europe Today*, *Inside Latin America*, *Inside South America*, *Inside Russia*, *Inside Russia Today*, *Inside Africa*, and *Inside the USA*. In 1943, Mr. Gunther served as an official accredited war correspondent on the Mediterranean fronts.

In each country Mr. Gunther has visited, he has interviewed virtually every important world leader—Trotsky, Schweitzer, MacArthur, Macmillan, de Gaulle, Khrushchev, Churchill, Roosevelt, Chiang Kai-shek, Chou En-lai, Hirohito, Tito, Nkrumah, Nehru—and "Mr. Gandhi."

John Gunther's other books include *Roosevelt in Retrospect*; *Eisenhower*; *A Fragment of Autobiography*; *Procession*; and *Death Be not Proud*, the memoir of his young son, John, who died of a brain tumor at 17. This book, the story of his son's courage through the last year of his life, has since attained the dimensions of a classic. In all, Mr. Gunther's work has been translated into 33 different languages.



*M*r. Gandhi is the greatest Indian since Buddha. Like Buddha, he will be worshiped as a god when he dies. Indeed, he is already literally worshiped by thousands of his people. I have seen peasants kiss the sand his feet have trod.

No more difficult or enigmatic character can easily be conceived. But consider some of the contradictions, some of the puzzling points of contrast in his career and character. This man who is at once a saint and a politician, a prophet and a superb opportunist, defies ordinary categories.

For instance, his great contribution to India was the theory and practice of nonviolence or civil disobedience. But at the very time that nonviolence was the deepest thing he believed in, he was supporting Britain in the First World War. The concept of nonviolence is a perfect example of Gandhi's familiar usage of moral weapons to achieve practical results, of his combination of spiritual and temporal powers. India, an unarmed state, could make a revolution only by nonviolent means. Nonviolence was a spiritual concept, but it made revolution practicable.

His inconsistencies seem remarkable, until you note that his objective seldom varies, but that he is willing to compromise on contributory details. He is interested in substance, not form. For instance, he devoted the major portion of his career to a titanic struggle with Britain, yet later he cooperated more or less freely with Britain under the new constitution. His point in this case was that his objective, Indian independence, could more easily be achieved by *cooperation* than by struggle, once civil disobedience was over.

There are other paradoxes and contradictions. To Gandhi modern science is anathema, but nevertheless he uses a thermometer and wears eyeglasses. He pleads for Hindu-Moslem unity but he wouldn't gladly see a member of his family become a Moslem. For years he was the soul, backbone, eyes, and fingers of the Indian National Congress, but he was not a member of it. His approach to everything is religious, but aside from Hinduism it is difficult to tell what his religion is.

The record of his life is heroic in the best sense of that word: he is a man who fought—and almost won—an elemental struggle against

the nature of his environment. This tough and rubbery little man, dressed in a loin cloth and sitting by his spinning wheel, who weighs 112 pounds, took on the greatest empire the world has ever known—an empire with every recourse in manpower, accumulated wealth, tradition, skill and strategy in administration—and almost vanquished it. He fought fate—and what used to be stronger than fate—the British Empire. Nowadays people are apt to assume that Mr. Gandhi, with his score of great years behind him, is played out; they even think that he no longer counts in India. Nothing could be farther from the truth. He is still the most important living Indian. One cannot be in India two hours without finding out that he still somehow manages to rule the Congress.

Many young nationalists are impatient at his mysticism, and even his most devoted admirers occasionally blink at his unpredictable vagaries. They think, for instance, that his willingness to compromise with Britain—now—passes proper limits. But his hold on the great masses of the Indian people is unshaken. He is adored as well as worshiped. He is a unique kind of dictator, one who rules by love. His photograph is enshrined in a million cottages; children, sick, are touched with his likeness to make them well. Peasants may come twenty miles simply to see his train pass, even if it does not stop and he is not visible. To the submerged masses, the "dumb half-starved millions" as he frequently calls them, he is a man of miracles. All over India I noticed how the faces of people lit up when his name was mentioned. And he is the only man in India who by a single word, by lifting his little finger, could instigate a new national revolt, who could start civil disobedience again among more than 350,000,000 people—roughly one-fifth of the human race.

Nowadays the Mahatma lives most of the year in a remote village called Segaon (later known as Sewagram), near Wardha, in the very center of the most backward part of India. He chose it because it was peculiarly inaccessible, surrounded by mud and dust, and populated largely by Harijans (children of God), which is the name he has given the untouchables. He wanted to demonstrate that even the most unbelievably backward village in India—and he



searched hard to find it—could benefit by Gandhism.

He rises every day at 4-30 for his morning prayers, and then takes a brisk walk, rain or shine. He did this even in London, when he exhausted the two detectives assigned to guard him. When I write "brisk," I mean "brisk." He walks as Paavo Nurmi runs. I have enjoyed watching Europeans in good condition try to keep up with him. He sails along, carrying a long staff, like some extraordinary bird.

The prayers are very important, even more important than the ritual of stiff daily exercise. In London he would interrupt any meeting without a trace of self-consciousness to sit down on the floor and pray—even in a committee room of the House of Commons. He prays twice a day, in the morning and at sunset. The sunset prayers are in the nature of a public ceremony, because his household joins him, together with the villagers.

First his attendants lay a rectangle of straw mats on the ground. Quietly the people gather, squatting on the periphery of the open rectangle, and lamps are lit. The evening I saw the prayers on Juhu beach (Mr. Gandhi was having a holiday near Bombay) a Japanese priest joined the ceremony, and Miss Madeline Slade, the daughter of an English admiral who is the faithful manager of his household, sang from the Hindu scriptures. The moon rose at one end of the beach just as the sun was setting; the night was calm, still, and very beautiful. Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi walked quietly up, and the Mahatma took his place at the short end of the rectangle, facing the sea. He sat there cross-legged, head bowed, for precisely thirty minutes. There was no other ceremony. No one spoke; no one moved; but the Hindu chants continued plangently. Suddenly he rose; the enchantment broke, and the prayers were over.

He eats no meat, of course, and in fact only seldom takes any cooked food; but it is not quite correct to say that he eats very little. A mug of goat's milk, dates, nuts, a tablespoon of honey, garlic, a bowl of chopped fresh vegetables, and plenty of fruit—oranges, pineapples, mangoes, peaches—this is the general menu.

He works very hard, seeing people incessantly, receiving visitors, consulting people even when in retirement. Any particularly interesting conversations appear later in his newspaper,

the *Harijan*. So no words are wasted. He keeps up a considerable correspondence with people all over the world. His chief relaxation is his bath; he bathes in very hot water for forty minutes, before retiring, and usually reads in the tub.

His work nowadays centers mostly on the village. To revive the village, and thus prevent the countrymen from being sucked into the terrible slums of the towns, is his plan. He has a five-point program for village welfare and economy. Encourage home spinning. Make village education vocational. Improve sanitation. Bring the untouchables into the community. Above all, stimulate village industry. He is doing his best, for instance, to create work from by-products of dead cattle, fertilizers and the like. Of course no Hindu would kill a cow, which is sacred in India, but the Mahatma is trying to persuade the villagers to utilize those that die naturally—not an easy thing to persuade them to do.

Gandhi has very little need of money, and the financing of his household doesn't seem to be a problem, because what he needs he gets from charity. Rich friends flock across his path. He has small interest in economics in the abstract, and has driven young Congress socialists to despair by his refusal to think in economic terms. Once he told a socialist friend that he believed in both private property and nationalisation. "I purchase a mill, for example," he explained. "Then I give the people good wages; that is socialism!"

His epistolary style is quite his own. Consider this telegram of condolence to his friend Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who succeeded him as Congress leader, when Nehru's mother died:

Mother lived nobly, has died nobly. She was model wife, mother. No sorrow. Let our women copy example. Love. Bapu.... "Bapu" is what his friends and intimates call him; it is the Gujarati word for father. In his early days he was called "Bhai"—brother. Few people in India call him "Mahatma"; he has always been embarrassed by the phrase. Ordinarily—in fact, universally—he is called "Gandhiji," "ji" being an untranslatable suffix which informally means "Mr." but which connotes affection also. Sometimes he is called "Bapuji" or even "Mahatmaji."

His health is quite good, except that he





suffers intermittently from high blood pressure. He looks made of rubber. He is not nearly as frail, as brittle, as his photographs indicate; the torso is well-formed, and the muscles hard and smooth. His personal physician, Dr. Roy, one of the first doctors of India, told me that he was "superbly normal." But then Dr. Roy admitted that Gandhiji could do things that normal men could not do. His experience of fasting has, for instance, given him peculiar powers over his body. Once—indication that he is not given to self-delusion—he noted that fasting could be "as great a weapon of indulgence as restraint." Once he was down to ninetyseven pounds and eating only 400 calories a day. Dr. Roy

said he must get up to 104 pounds, and that he could do this only by doubling his intake of food. Gandhi listened patiently, refused to change his diet, and asserted that he could take on the necessary seven pounds in one week without changing his diet by one calorie. Which he did.

He will say, "I will go to sleep for twentyfive minutes. Then he can fall asleep instantly, and sleep for twentyfive minutes and no more. On the trains his attendants know that he will be asleep within thirty seconds of getting into the compartment. Once he was asleep in an automobile, returning from Pandit Motilal Nehru's funeral. The car overturned. Mr. Gandhi was thrown out, but when his worried friends



went to him on the roadside he was asleep again. Mr. Gandhi is much less oppressive a personality than most people think. He loves laughter. He bubbles and chuckles in talk. Once he told a friend that he might have killed himself long ago but for his sense of humor.

The record of Gandhiji's positive qualities is a long one. The brief narrative I have given of his career indicates some. There are many others, which perhaps help to explain his enormous power and hold on Indians.

For one thing, his unbelievable simplicity. Once on shipboard he persuaded a friend to toss into the sea an expensive pair of binoculars. In prison in South Africa he offered to clean the latrines himself, although the warden asked him to choose someone else for the job. Once a Christian was his guest; Mr. Gandhi himself tended to emptying the chamber pot. In South Africa he learned laundering, starched his own collars, and taught himself to cut his own hair. One possibly apocryphal story describes the Englishman who shouted "Coolie" at him at a railway station. Obediently Mr. Gandhi picked up the Englishman's bags and took them to the train.

His intelligence is quick and shrewd. One could write a thousand words about Miss Mayo's *Mother India* and not describe it better than did Gandhi with his famous remark, "It is a book that no European and every Indian should read." His political sense is acute on other than merely Indian questions. He called the Munich agreement "Peace without honor," and doubted that it would bring peace.

He is uncommonly intuitive, and not only catches the moods of people very quickly, but is capable of quick changes of mood himself. He senses it instantly if his friends are tired; he talks nonsense, laughs, gossips, makes jokes. But he can resume serious discussion instantly.

His consideration for others is very detailed. Nehru records how he found time during a serious crisis to send word to him that his little daughter had taken on weight. (Nehru was in jail at the time.) When, after the Round Table Conference, he wanted to give presents to the two detectives who had risen at 4.30 to jog with him through Kensington Gardens, he didn't know what to select, since Congress

was boycotting British goods; so he sent for two Swiss watches. Once leaving Bombay on a long trip, he saw a friend's wife among the concourse of people seeing him off; he remembered to tell her not to buy a new house she was interested in—this was his method of hinting that civil disobedience might begin again, and that none of them would need new houses. Another woman friend told me that Gandhiji had certainly saved her life, merely by seeing her occasionally, talking to her, during a severe nervous breakdown.

He has this tact, charm, consideration, but he can be stubborn for a principle. Consider for instance the story of the illness of his ten-year old child Manilal.

The doctor found Manilal with a high fever, caused by pneumonia after typhoid. He said that eggs and chicken broth might save him, but Mr. Gandhi refused to allow him either. "Manilal was only ten years old. To consult his wishes was out of the question. I had to decide." The doctors implored Gandhi to give the boy nourishing food, since his life was in grave danger, but the father continued to refuse. He told the doctor that he would treat Manilal in his own way, if the doctor would consent to come in from time to time and examine him. He gave Manilal hip baths and orange juice, and Manilal bravely said, "I will not have eggs or chicken broth." But the boy grew worse. His fever reached 104°. Gandhi

proceeds:  
I began to get anxious. What would people say of me? What right had parents to inflict their fads on their children?... I was haunted by thoughts like these. Then a contrary current would start. God would surely be pleased to see that I was giving the same treatment to my son as I would give myself.... The doctor could not guarantee recovery. At best he could experiment. The thread of life was in the hands of God....

It was night. My mind was torn between these conflicting thoughts. I was in Manilal's bed lying by his side. I decided to give him a wet sheet pack. To the head I applied a wet towel.... The whole body was burning like hot iron, and quite parched. There was absolutely no perspiration....

I was sorely tired. I left Manilal in charge of his mother, and went out for a walk....



Very few pedestrians were out. Plunged in deep thought, I scarcely looked at them. "My honor is in Thy keeping, oh Lord, in this hour of trial," I repeated to myself.... After a short time I returned, my heart beating in my breast.

No sooner had I returned, than Manilal said, "You have returned, Bapu?"

"Yes, darling."

"Do please pull me out. I am burning."

"Are you perspiring, my boy?"

"I am simply soaked. Do please take me out."

I felt his forehead. It was covered with beads of perspiration. The temperature was going down. I thanked God.... I undid the pack, dried his body, and father and son fell asleep in the same bed.

Another source of power is his tremendous knowledge of India. There are 700,000 villages in India, and Gandhiji has visited an extraordinary number of them. His travels have been epochal. In the third-class trains and especially on foot, he has covered the entire peninsula.

The things Gandhi likes most are children, fresh air, laughter, friends, the truth. What he dislikes most is a lie.

This is another source of power. People cannot lie to him. I heard this all over India: as if the Mahatma had some supernatural quality which overcame temptation to falsehood in other people. His own sincerity, his own love of truth, is so great that he brings out truth in others. Jawaharlal Nehru, who admits that his language is sometimes incomprehensible, talks of his wonderful "knack of reaching the hearts of the people" by this means.

His colossal spiritual integrity on the one hand; his earthly command of politics on the other—this is Gandhi gambit.

He personally advocated *khaddar* and village spinning, which plunged his revolution into the heart of the countryside; he walked to Dandi and the sea, and behind him spread the wildfire of revolt. He likes to choose a small concrete objective that the starved, illiterate millions can easily grasp. Recently the Bombay government wondered how to reach the peasants quickly with concrete proof of the Congress program. Gandhi suggested abolition of a

grazing fee that hampered movements of their cattle, and in a few days word of the new program had spread widely. When he decided to hold the annual sessions of Congress, where a hundred thousand people congregate, in tiny villages instead of the great towns, people said that it would be impossible. They pointed to the lack of sanitary arrangements; they were terrified of cholera. But Mr. Gandhi simply let cholera go hang, and nobody got sick—at least not of cholera.

When he left Congress in 1934, he did so in order to make himself more honest, more neutral. He wanted to be in a position to adjudicate, not merely between different factions within Congress, but between Congress and the British. This is as if Abraham Lincoln, say, had quit the presidency in the middle of the Civil War, in order to see that the North behaved with proper honor to the South.

When people in India talk about Mr. Gandhi's defects, they are apt to mention half a dozen things.

First, he is dictatorial. "If you choose to follow my lead, you must accept my conditions," he said once. As I have mentioned, he went to the Round Table Conference alone—and as a result was drowned in detail and outmanoeuvred—and he stated once that he alone must decide whether or not civil disobedience is ever to be renewed.

Second, his medievalism. Even his closest friends object to his extravagant use of religious symbolism. There was a great earthquake in Bihar in 1934; Mr. Gandhi promptly announced that this was punishment sent to India for the sin of untouchability; Nehru has a passage describing how this staggered him.

Third, his meekness, his masochism, have played into the hands of the British in negotiation.

Fourth, his sense of proportion is off-balance. He will stop work all day to deal with any sudden small problem, for instance, a forlorn mother in a village, or a crying child. His friends were horrified at several of his fasts, in which he risked his life for what modern minds thought were minor issues. He twice canceled nationwide civil disobedience, as we have seen, because of isolated cases of impurity



or violence. (But with wonderful political instinct, he knew that each campaign was lost, and that it was wise to recede at just that time.) One story is that he held up negotiations for the Gandhi-Irwin truce because an officer in Gujarat impounded a peasant's cow. The Mahatma stopped everything until that cow was released.

Fifth, and above all his inveterate love of compromise. He is a staunch antagonist, but he infinitely prefers settlement to struggle. Gandhiji wants compromise with the socialists, with the princes, with the industrial magnates, with the government in Delhi. Surely no man has ever so quickly and easily let bygones be bygones. He has no hatreds, no resentments; once a settlement is made, he cooperates with enemies as vigorously as he fought them.

Associated with this quality of compromise is his dislike of hard and fast definitions. Once during the Round Table Conference he offered the Moslems a blank check in settlement of communal difficulties, provided they would subscribe to the Congress program of complete independence. Thereupon Mr. Jinnah, the Moslem leader, confronted the Mahatma with seven different definitions of independence which he had at one time or other made.

No one in India knows precisely, beyond shadow of a doubt, where the Mahatma draws the line between "Dominion Status" and "Independence." He seldom defines his terms. Once he was asked by a political writer of the *Times of India* to give an important statement on provincial autonomy. He dictated it rapidly, and the writer was delighted with his scoop. He took the statement back to the office—there were only four sentences—whereupon it was discovered that each of the four sentences could be interpreted in different ways.

There are important nuances even to his concept of civil disobedience. He abhors violence, but he admits that some things are worse than violence—cowardice, for example. He dislikes "passive resistance" as a synonym for *satyagraha*, because he feels that *satyagraha* is not passive; it is nonviolent resistance, which is quite a different thing from non-resistance *per se*.

He adores formulae. When the Working Committee of the Congress meets these days, Mr. Gandhi stays away, waits until the members are in disagreement, and then finds a formula for straightening them out. This science is known throughout India as "Mahatmatics."

There is nothing to prevent us from profiting by the light that may come from the West. Only we must take care that we are not overpowered by the glamour of the West. We must not mistake the glamour for true light.

—Gandhi



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# APPEAL TO AMERICA

M.K. GANDHI

*On September 13, 1931, two days after Gandhi arrived in England, the Columbia Broadcasting System arranged for him to deliver a radio address to the American people. Gandhi did not write out his speech in advance; his remarks were completely extemporaneous. He approached the microphone with curiosity and trepidation and asked, "Do I have to speak into that thing?" He was already on the air and these were the first words his listeners on the other side of the Atlantic heard. Three minutes before his time was to be up, a note was passed to him saying that his voice would be cut off in New York in three minutes. Unruffled, he began to bring his impromptu speech to a conclusion. After the engineer signalled for him to stop, he commented, "Well, that's over." These words, too, somehow were carried across the Atlantic. The American press reproduced great portions of this speech on the following day, although the British press largely ignored it.*

**I**n my opinion, the Indian struggle (for freedom) bears in its consequences not only upon India (and England) but upon the whole world. It contains one-fifth of the human race. It represents one of the most ancient civilizations. It has traditions handed down from tens of thousands of years, some of which, to the astonishment of the world, remain intact. No doubt the ravages of time have affected the purity of that civilization as they have that of many other cultures and many institutions.

If India is to revive the glory of her ancient past, she can only do so when she attains her

freedom. The reason for the struggle having drawn the attention of the world I know does not lie in the fact that we Indians are fighting for our liberty, but in the fact that the means adopted by us for attaining that liberty are unique and, as far as history shows us, have not been adopted by any other people of whom we have any record.

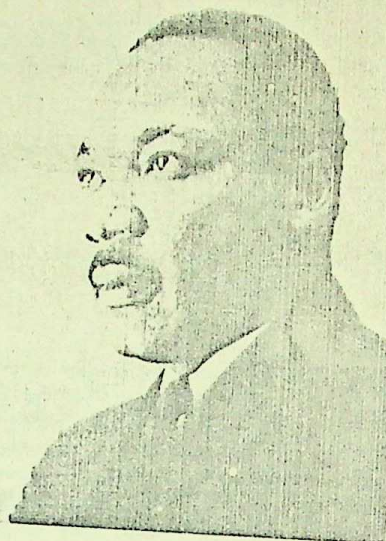
The means adopted are not violence, not bloodshed, not diplomacy as one understands it nowadays, but they are purely and simply truth and nonviolence. No wonder that the attention of the world is directed toward this attempt to lead a successful bloodless revolution. Hitherto, nations have fought in the manner of the brute. They have wreaked vengeance upon those whom they have considered to be their enemies.

We find in searching national anthems adopted by great nations that they contain imprecations upon the so-called enemy. They have vowed destruction and have not hesitated to take the name of God and seek divine assistance for the destruction of the enemy. We in India have endeavoured to reverse the process. We feel that the law that governs brute creation is not the law that should guide the human race. That law is inconsistent with human dignity.

I, personally, would wait, if need be, for ages rather than seek to attain the freedom of my country through bloody means. I feel in the innermost recesses of my heart, after a political experience extending over an unbroken period of close upon thirty-five years, that the world is sick unto death of blood-spilling. The world is seeking a way out, and I flatter myself with the belief that perhaps it will be the privilege of the

The introduction and text are reprinted here with the consent of Haridas T. Mazumdar, *Gandhi Versus the Empire*. (New York: Universal Publishing Company, 1932).





*From my background, I gained my regulating Christian ideals. From Gandhi, I learned my operational technique.*

— Martin Luther King

ancient land of India to show the way to the  
hungering world.

I have, therefore, no hesitation whatsoever in  
inviting all the great nations of the earth to give  
their hearty cooperation to India in her mighty  
struggle. It must be a sight worth contemplating  
and treasuring, that of millions of people giving  
themselves to suffering without retaliation in  
order that they might vindicate the dignity and  
honor of the nation.

I have called that suffering a process of self-  
purification. It is my certain conviction that no  
man loses his freedom except through his own  
weakness. I am painfully conscious of our own  
weaknesses. We represent in India all the princi-  
pal religions of the earth, and it is a matter of  
deep humiliation to confess that we are a house  
divided against itself, that we Hindus and Mussal-  
mans are flying at one another. It is a matter  
of still deeper humiliation to me that we Hindus  
regard several million of our own kith and kin  
as too degraded even for our touch. I refer to  
the so-called "untouchables."

These are no small weaknesses in a nation  
struggling to be free. And hence you will find that  
in this struggle through self-purification we have  
assigned a foremost place to the removal of this  
curse of untouchability and the attainment of  
unity amongst all the different classes and com-  
munities of India representing the different  
creeds.

It is along the same lines that we seek to rid  
our land of the curse of drink. Happily for us,  
intoxicating drinks and drugs are confined to  
comparatively a very small number of people,  
largely factory hands and the like. Fortunately for  
us, the drink and drug curse is accepted as a  
curse. It is not considered to be the fashion for  
a man or a woman to drink or to take intoxicat-  
ing drugs. All the same, it is an uphill fight that  
we are fighting in trying to remove this evil from  
our midst.

For it is a matter of regret, deep regret, for  
me to have to say that the existing government  
has made of this evil a source of very large re-  
venue, amounting to nearly twentyfive crores of



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rupees (about \$85,000,000). But I am thankful to be able to say that the women of India have risen to the occasion in combating it by peaceful means, that is, by fervent appeal to those who are given to the drink habit to give it up, and by an equally fervent appeal to the liquor dealers. A great impression has been created upon those who are addicted to these two evil habits.

I wish that it were possible for me to say that in this, at least, we are receiving the hearty cooperation of the rulers. If we could only have received that cooperation, (even) without any legislation, I dare say that we would have achieved this reform and banished intoxicating drinks and drugs from our afflicted land.

There is a force which has a constructive effect and which has been put forth by the nation during this struggle. That is the great care for the semi-starved millions scattered throughout the 700,000 villages dotted over a surface 1,900 miles long and 1,500 miles broad. It is a painful phenomenon that these simple villagers, through no fault of their own, have nearly six months in the year idleness upon their hands. The time was not very long ago when every

village was self-sufficient in regard to the two primary human wants, food and clothing.

Unfortunately for us, the East India Company, by means which I would prefer not to describe, destroyed that supplementary village industry as well as the livelihood of millions of spinners who had become famous through the cunning of their deft fingers for drawing the finest thread, such as has never yet been drawn by any modern machinery. These village spinners found themselves one fine morning with their noble occupation gone. And from that day forward India has become progressively poor.

No matter what may be said to the contrary, it is a historical fact that before the advent of the East India Company, these villagers were not idle, and he who wants may see today that these villagers are idle. It, therefore, requires no great effort or learning to know that these villagers must starve if they cannot work for six months in the year.

May I not, then, on behalf of these semi-starved millions, appeal to the conscience of the world to come to the rescue of a people dying to regain its liberty?

... when I think of Gandhi, I think of Jesus Christ. He lives his life; he speaks his word; he suffers, strives and will some day nobly die for his kingdom upon earth.

—John Haynes Holmes



Public opinion in the United States was heavily behind Mahatma Gandhi in his quest for national freedom. President Franklin D. Roosevelt used the full persuasive power of the United States to accelerate British policy in the direction of Indian independence. Writers, journalists, clergymen, and public figures, like John Gunther, Herbert Matthews, Louis Fischer, Howard Thurman, Vincent Sheean, Will Durant, John Haynes Holmes, and Margaret Bourke-White, were all caught up in the moral issues of the Indian struggle. They enlisted the compassionate understanding of Americans for the aspirations of the Indian people. And they tried to interpret the otherwise improbable figure of the Mahatma in terms that would be both accessible and compelling.

This volume, published in connection with the centennial anniversary of Gandhi's birth, consists of American tributes to, or recollections of, the Mahatma. It becomes clear, therefore, that the high regard in which he was held was more than the product of the sympathetic outpouring that usually follows a great man's death. The writings in this book represent a genuine reflection of Gandhi's hold on the moral imagination of the American people.

Some acknowledgments. Dana Little is primarily responsible for this book, even though my name is attached to it as editor. Miss Little did all the basic research and brought all the essential materials together. I am also grateful to Arthur S. Lall, former Indian Ambassador to the United Nations and now adjunct Professor of International Affairs at Columbia University, who provided much valuable criticism about certain portions of the manuscript.

My thanks, too, go to the United States Information Agency which asked me to put together this book in the belief that the Mahatma's countrymen might be interested in an American estimate of Mohandas K. Gandhi, both during his lifetime and after.

New York, N.Y.  
September, 1968.

Norman Cousins



## INTRODUCTION

Ultimately, the greatness of a man must be measured not by the amount of adulation accorded him but by the impact of his life on others. When this yardstick is applied to the people of India, Mahatma Gandhi's major place in history is instantly apparent. But what about his influence outside India? More particularly, how has his greatness affected the lives and ideas of Americans?

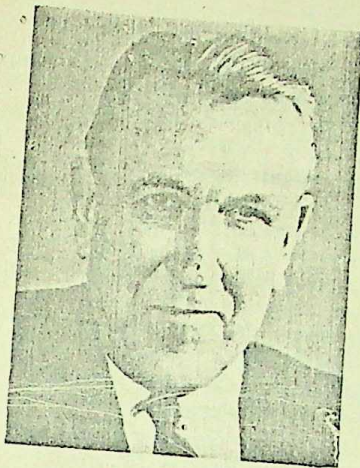
During the Thirties, when Gandhi's world influence was strongest, he was an implausible figure to many Americans. He seemed to be the quintessential opposite of the traditional American hero. The qualities most characteristic of the men who built the United States were dynamism, robustness, venturesomeness. Many of the names that stand high on the list of America's national heroes—men like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt—were men who in personality and style were in stark personal contrast to Mahatma Gandhi. The fact that Gandhi held no office accentuated the contrast.

Yet, Gandhi had a profound impact on Americans, as the life story of Martin Luther King has dramatized.

For there is an aspect of the American character that runs just as deep as the traditional respect for boldness, daring, and physical strength. I refer to the respect accorded the truly committed man. Men like Washington stand high in American history, but there are also high places for philosophers, writers and teachers, like Benjamin Franklin, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, William James, Horace Mann, John Dewey. These men regarded themselves as world citizens caught up in a great adventure of ideas. Gandhi felt himself drawn to men of this stamp and dimension. The presiding idea of the men who framed the United States Constitution was that they were building a human community rather than a purely national one. They wanted to create the conditions under which human beings would come into full possession of their intelligence and energies.

It is significant that Gandhi acknowledged his philosophical debt to Thoreau's ideas on civil disobedience. It should also be noted that the revolutionary part of the American people and their success in wresting themselves free of outside rule were natural bonds between Indians and Americans.





# WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM GANDHI

CHESTER BOWLES

"Now let's practice it again," the Negro preacher said to members of his congregation. "I'm a white man and I insult you, I shove you, may be I hit you. What do you do?"

Their answer was ready: "I keep my temper. I do not budge. I do not strike back. I turn the other cheek."

It was a December evening in 1956. After a year of walking to work and of riding in hundreds of cars organized in general pools the 42,000 Negroes of Montgomery, Alabama, had established their constitutional right to ride in nonsegregated buses.

With the beginning of the next workday the new bus rules would go into effect. Now they were patiently going through demonstration sessions in their churches, pretending the pews were bus seats, learning how to apply their Christian principles to this most explosive of all problems in human relations. "Now remember," their ministers advised them, "don't crow. Don't lord it over the white riders. Show patience and respect. Do unto them as you would have them do unto you."

In the following weeks, white extremists fired shots, hurled bombs and subjected the Negroes and their leaders to a barrage of threats and insults. But they stood their ground, firm and

dignified, without arrogance or bitterness.

When their victory was finally won, many white citizens who had been active in organizing resistance to bus desegregation said grudgingly, "We didn't know the Negroes had the stuff to do what they've just done. We never thought we'd respect them, but we have."

Just how had this practical, latter-day demonstration of the Sermon on the Mount been achieved? What were the techniques which made it possible?

The Montgomery program had deep spiritual roots, not only in Christianity but in the ancient religions of Asia. Martin Luther King, the twentyseven-year-old Negro minister who more than any other individual was responsible for its success, says frankly that he borrowed his techniques directly from Gandhi, who used them brilliantly to bring freedom to nearly 400,000,000 Indians.

Gandhi in turn was stimulated by the views of the Russian writer, Tolstoy, and by the American, Thoreau, who was sentenced to serve in a Massachusetts prison because of his "peaceful protest" against the Fugitive Slave Laws. Indeed, it was from Thoreau's essay, *Civil Disobedience*, that Gandhi borrowed the phrase widely to describe his program.



Thoreau himself was influenced by the writings of the forest wisemen of India who wrote the *Upanishads*. These ancient Hindu writings were translated into English in the early 1800's. Thoreau read and pondered them in the Harvard College library. Thus this political technique of boycott and nonviolent protest has already crossed and recrossed the ocean to strengthen hearts and to influence minds in South Asia, South Africa and, in Alabama, USA.

Many Americans who consider themselves hardheaded may discount the happenings in Montgomery as a special situation and scoff at the suggestion that such techniques could, in fact, ease the explosive racial antagonism that plagues so many American communities. But one thing is sure: their skepticism is no greater than that of Gandhi's contemporaries a few years before his final triumph.

When this little man in a loin cloth said, "I believe it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire, to save his honor, his religion, his soul, and to lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration," there was general merriment in British and Indian ruling circles. But even the most skeptical ultimately came to honor him.

After years of jail-going in resistance to unfair laws and years of hard constructive work to create the conditions of justice among the Indians themselves, he demonstrated the political power of his religious faith. By bringing that faith shrewdly and courageously to bear on the intolerable institution of colonialism he freed the Indian people. In so doing, he laid the groundwork for the fall of the British colonial empire and for its regeneration in the British Commonwealth of Nations—exactly as he said he would.

There are suggestive parallels between the Montgomery boycott and the beginning of Gandhi's struggle. The movement in Montgomery started from an incident which blossomed into a crusade.

A quiet Negro seamstress, Mrs. Rosa Parks, had been forced many times to give her bus seat to a white person. But one day, for some reason that she herself does not fully understand, she suddenly decided not to move. When the driver threatened to call the police, she said, "Then you just call them."

Mrs. Parks was arrested. Negro religious

leaders called for a one-day citywide boycott of the buses. When white extremists reacted vigorously, the protest grew until it closed the entire city bus system and involved every Negro family in Montgomery.

The Gandhian movement which ultimately freed India from foreign rule started in about the same way; in his case the spark which set it off was struck on a train in remote, race-conscious South Africa in 1893.

Gandhi had begun his adult career a year or so earlier as an insecure, inarticulate young attorney. While studying law in England he wore a high silk hat and took dancing lessons. In India he was so shy and frightened that he lost his first case, involving a ten-dollar claim, when he began tongue-tied before the judge and was laughed out of court.

To help him build confidence in himself, his relatively well-to-do family arranged for him to handle a lawsuit between some Indian merchants in South Africa. In Africa's fiery racial furnace something happened that transformed this twenty-four-year-old failure into an architect of history.

When Gandhi arrived in South Africa, 100,000 Indians were living there, most of whom had been recruited as cheap labor for the European plantations and mines.

A few hundred chosen Indians had been given a right to vote, but otherwise all were second-class citizens. These were called "coolies" or "sammies" and suffered segregation. On the statute books they were described as "semi-barbarous Asiatics." Into this situation came the proud young British-educated Gandhi, insisting on his first class ways.

The right of his first ride in South Africa, Gandhi was ordered to leave the compartment reserved for whites. When he refused to do so, he was pushed off the train at the next station stop.

As he stood shivering there in the dark, his overcoat and baggage still on the train now fast disappearing down the tracks, Gandhi asked himself the fateful question, "Should I fight for my rights here or go back to India?"

"I came to the conclusion," he recounts, "that to run back to India would be cowardly." The "golden rule," he decided, "is to dare to do the right at any cost."

When he took the stagecoach for Pretoria he



was addressed as "sammie," ordered to sit outside on a dirty sackcloth and beaten by a burly white man. When he arrived in Pretoria, the hotels refused to give him a room. It was an American Negro who befriended him and somehow found him lodgings.

The next day he invited the Indians of Pretoria to a meeting at which he proposed that they stand up and fight the discrimination against them and that the fight be conducted with new, constructive methods. This time the words came easily.

The end they must seek, Gandhi said, was a community of true neighbors. Therefore, the means must be those of persuasion and not of violence. Members of the Indian minority must forego hatred. They must respect their white neighbors as fellow human beings even while opposing their unjust discriminatory laws. They must prepare themselves to endure blows and prison without flinching and without resort to counterblows or insults. They must persuade, but only through words not through their lives. Their words must become flesh.

"Let us begin," he suggested, "by considering the grievances held against us by the white people. Let us see if the reasons or rationalizations which the whites give for discriminating against us are justified."

"Then," he continued, "let us put our own house in order, even now while fighting for our civil rights, even before they grant the reforms we ask, even poor as we are."

Many of the Indian merchants who came to hear him were known for slick dealings and sharp bargaining. Gandhi proposed that they stick rigidly to the truth and that they show a new concern for their responsibility to the community.

All Indians, he added, must do something to improve the unsanitary conditions in the Indian slums. Why wait for legal victories "for the necessary drain cleaning?" he asked.

"We can't blame the whites," he continued, "for all our troubles, nor can we by ourselves end all the poverty in which our people are trapped. But we can begin to clean up our homes, to teach illiterate Indian adults to read and to provide free schools for the children of the poor."

By trial and error, Gandhi devised a political-action program with dramatic new dimensions. Instead of working just through the law—by

appealing for an end to restrictive legislation in parliament and by seeking court of electoral victories—Gandhi showed the Indians how to combine peaceful resistance to discriminatory laws with constructive community services.

When the Boer War came, his followers urged him to step up his resistance program. The whites, they said, had their backs against the wall and now was the time to put on the pressure.

Gandhi rejected this proposal as unfair. Instead, he called off his political campaign, organized an Indian volunteer ambulance corps of 1,100, and led them wherever the fighting was heaviest. For valor under fire he and thirty-six other Indians received Empire war medals.

When the war was over he renewed his program of nonviolent pressure on the government and the conflict again became intense. At one point the whites tried to lynch him, and he heard the mob singing, "We'll hang Gandhi from the sourapple tree."

Yet Gandhi did not flinch. He led tens of thousands of Indians in a peaceful march across the state, deliberately violating the segregation laws. Hundreds were struck down by the police and thousands went to prison.

When Jan Christian Smuts, the harried leader of the South African government, offered a civil rights compromise, that seemed honorable, Gandhi accepted it despite the violent opposition of militant Indians who asserted that this was a "betrayal."

Compromise and trust, he argued, is the essence of nonviolent struggle. "Even if the opponent plays him false twenty times," he said, the civil resister must be "ready to trust him for the twenty-first time—for an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed."

Later, as white pressure to reject all compromise on discrimination mounted, Smuts went back on his word, as Gandhi's response was to start the struggle anew. Again the jails were filled with hundreds of Indians who refused to obey discriminatory laws, but who also refused to exchange blows or insults.

Eventually, Prime Minister Smuts decided that there was no practical alternative but to reach a fair settlement with Gandhi. "You can't put twenty thousand Indians in jail," he said.



To Gandhi himself, one of Smuts' secretaries added, "I do not like your people and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands on you? I often wish you took to violence like the English strikers; then we would know at once how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy.... And that is what reduces us to sheer helplessness."

Before sailing home to India to apply his newly tested methods there in behalf of independence, Gandhi reminded the South African Indians that their victory was only half won. To Smuts, as a farewell present, he sent a pair of sandals that he had made while in jail as Smuts' prisoner.

Twentyfour years later on Gandhi's seventieth birthday, in 1939, Smuts, as a gesture of friendship, returned the sandals Gandhi had given him, to show that he had cherished them through the years. "I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man," wrote the first official to send Gandhi to prison. "It was my fate to be the antagonist of a man for whom even then I had the highest respect."

In Africa, Gandhi and the Indians were outnumbered ten to one. In India the situation was reversed. If 400,000,000 Indians learned to say "no" and mean it, Gandhi knew that they could end the domination of a few hundred thousand English men.

But here as in South Africa, the "no" which Gandhi taught them to say was not that of violent revolution or subversion or anarchy. Rather it was a method which taught respect for law even while resisting particular unjust laws. Peacefully, cheerfully and massively, he and his followers accepted jail as the penalty for disobeying them.

In India, as in Africa, Gandhi's program went far beyond the struggle against British domination. His goal was to build an India that could govern itself. Therefore he spent as much time training his countrymen in constructive work in the villages as in the effort to achieve national independence.

His thirteen-point program for Indian development included the end of untouchability within Hinduism, the establishment of Hindu-Moslem unity and brotherhood, and improved methods of agriculture, diet, education and public health

in the 5,00,000 villages where most Indians lived.

Gandhi's political genius enabled him to select and dramatise issues which the people understood. In 1930 his famous Salt March focused the whole independence fight on a simple demand of the Indian villager: an end to the hated British tax on salt and their prohibition of homemade salt.

When Gandhi announced that he would walk 200 miles to the shores of the Arabian Sea and make salt out of God's ocean in defiance of man's largest empire, India was electrified. Millions of peasants gathered along the roads to cheer him as he strode quickly by.

On the night of April 5th he reached the sea. "God willing," he said, "we will commence civil disobedience at 6.30 tomorrow morning." At sunrise he held his usual prayer and at the appointed time reached down to raise his first handful of salt from the salt beach.

As the news was flashed across the country the excitement became intense, reaching into the most remote villages. Nehru and nearly 100,000 others were arrested.

Then Gandhi announced that he would lead a nonviolent march of protest on the government salt depot. Although he, too, was promptly arrested the raid was carried out by 2,500 Indians pledged not to raise their hand or voice against the police.

Although hundreds were strack down, there was no resort to counterviolence. When Gandhi in his cell heard that even the fierce Pathan Moslems from the Northwest Frontier had maintained their self-discipline he was overjoyed. Indians everywhere began to stand a little straighter, and for the first time to feel that they, as individuals, had rights, responsibilities and a future.

Gandhi chose for his home the poorest village in the poorest part of India, where untouchables predominated. His associates protested, saying that he would bury himself there. Yet, Sevagram was soon accepted as the vital center of all India, the actual capital of this ancient nation in the course of its rebirth.

When I visited his mud hut there in 1952, it was exactly as he had left it. Among his books were the *Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ* and the *Gospel of St. John*. Gandhi had often said that his aim in life was to live the Sermon on the Mount.



On the wall over Gandhi's simple bed hung a sign: "When you are in the right you can afford to keep your temper; and when you are wrong you cannot afford to lose it."

For thirty years, Gandhi, with brilliant political timing and a resolute belief in ultimate victory, applied his revolutionary new technique of peaceful political action to the creation of a free and socially awakened India.

Independence finally came, on August 15, 1947. Throughout India wildly cheering crowds gathered for the celebration. Massed Indian and British army bands played their respective national anthem, the Union Jack came down from the flagstaffs and the new flag of independent India proudly rose in its place.

What a strange and magnificent climax to an anti-colonial revolution! Four hundred million people had won their right to rule themselves. Miraculously, they had won it without bloodshed or rancour.

Because the British yielded gracefully, the basis was laid for a new relationship of equality and mutual respect within the British Commonwealth.

As in Montgomery, Alabama, nine years later, there was grudging admiration even from the diehards: "Say what you will, you have to give these people credit."

Gandhi's chief lieutenant, Jawaharlal Nehru, went from being the king's prisoner to the king's first minister of his largest domain. And Lord Mountbatten went from being the last Viceroy of the Emperor of India to the first Governor-general of a free commonwealth selected for this honor by the very people who had fought British rule most of their lives. British governors who had sent thousands of Indians to jail suddenly found themselves showered with garlands and goodwill.

No thoughtful person can deny the practical effectiveness of the Gandhian approach in India or even in Montgomery, Alabama. But can it work in Little Rock, Chicago, Levittown, and New Orleans? Can it free Americans—North, South, East and West—from the suffocating burden of racial prejudice and fear accumulated in 300 years of largely unconscious compromise with Christian principles?

To answer these questions we need to consider why Gandhi's political techniques set India free and paved the way for her emergence as an

effective new democracy. The explanations of Gandhi's closest associates, including Nehru, agree on all the essentials.

The prime condition for the success of Gandhi's way of fighting injustice, they say, was that it took place within a legal system administered by people who professed a democratic creed and who permitted a large measure of free speech and a free press.

The British national conscience was stirred by the Gandhian struggle because the British are a deeply democratic and peaceful people. His techniques were effective because the free institutions of Britain enabled Gandhi's views and the story of his own and his followers' sacrifices to reach the people.

Dozing consciences were thus awakened, deep religious chords were struck and an atmosphere of respect and support for India's cause gradually was created.

As a trained lawyer, Gandhi never lost his respect for the majesty of law. He called for the acceptance of the state's right to make and enforce laws, while offering up his person and his freedom in protest until those laws which violated democratic principles were changed. His appeal was from manmade discriminatory laws to a higher natural law, to the moral laws.

This is precisely the approach that enabled the brilliantly led, well-organised Negro citizens of Montgomery to abolish segregation on the city buses. Under the leadership and inspiration of the Reverend Martin Luther King and his associates, they began their mass meetings with prayers "for those that oppose us," and they regularly pledged themselves to use "only the weapons of love and nonviolence." They said they were "walking with God." They named their movement the Montgomery Improvement Association.

Dr. King laid down their objectives in eloquent Gandhian terms. "The Negro," he said, "must come to the point that he can say to his white brothers: 'We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. We will not hate you, but we will not obey your evil laws. We will soon wear you down by our capacity to suffer. So, in winning the victory, we will not only win freedom for ourselves but we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that you





Gandhi's morning walk with close inmates of the ashram and members of his family. It is hard to overemphasize the importance of the daily ritual. The walk takes place at 6 a. m. (gets earlier as the days get hotter.) Sometimes, when there are too many people lining the wall to watch, the Gandhi clan jumps into one of the Birla cars and whiz to some park or garden on the outskirts of Delhi (a different one each time) where they won't be followed. Gandhi used to walk for a full hour. Now he walks for only a half hour. They are afraid of his "overstraining" himself, with his day so full and the weather so hot. The importance of his walk is in its relation to his philosophy of physical fitness. He often has said that if he had to make a choice between missing a meal and missing a walk, he would choose the first.

This picture is important because it is probably the most inclusive view that could be taken of Gandhi and his intimate household. Here, Gandhi is leaning on the shoulders of Abha, his daughter-in-law, and Sita, his granddaughter. Just behind Abha, you can catch a glimpse of Kanu Gandhi. On the other side of Sita is his devoted secretary and editor of *Harijan*, Pyarelal. A bit behind Pyarelal and third from the left (with specs) is Manilal Gandhi. At extreme left of the picture is Sushila Pai, who was principal of a girls' school at Rajkot and is now helping Gandhi as an additional secretary. Second from the left as we look at the print is the main secretary, Rajkumari Anrit Kaur, distinguished by scarf over head. A little behind Pyarelal and a bit behind Sita is Pyarelal's sister, who is Gandhi's M. D., his personal woman physician, and always at his ashram with him.

— Margaret Bourke-White



will be changed also. The victory will be a double victory; we will defeat the evil system and win the hearts and souls of the perpetrators of the "evil system."

Like Gandhi, Dr. King also stressed that he and his associates were working for the advancement of the whites as well as for that of the colored people. "We are seeking to improve not the Negro of Montgomery," he said, "but the whole of Montgomery."

His appeal to his Negro listeners to put their own house in order is reminiscent of Gandhi's appeal sixty years ago to the Indians living in the slums of Pretoria. "Let us examine the reasons given by white men for segregation," Dr. King said. "Let us see which reflect conditions we can do something about, and take action ourselves. Some say we want our constitutional rights so we can marry their daughters. But that is nonsense, so we don't have to pay any attention to that."

"Some say that we smell. Well, the fact is that some of us do smell. We cannot afford a plane trip to Paris to buy the world's most expensive perfumes, but no Negro in Montgomery is so poor that he cannot afford a five-cent bar of soap."

And then King goes on frankly to list the illegitimacy rate among Negroes, their crime rate, their purchase of cars beyond their means, their lower health standards. And the Montgomery Improvement Association works day and night to remove these legacies of slavery, segregation and enforced second class citizenship.

Already Montgomery city and welfare records are beginning to reflect the change—a drop in Negro drinking, in juvenile delinquency, in divorce.

If this combination program of nonviolent opposition to segregation and community service spreads beyond Montgomery, the road is likely to be a rocky one. Gandhi himself demonstrated that there is no easy, effortless path to the attainment of our Christian objective of equal dignity for all men.

Nehru noted that by turning the other cheek the Indians at first only enraged the British. Never, he says, had he seen men with more hate in their eyes than the soldiers who beat him with their long, steel-tipped rods, while he stood quietly, not lifting a finger in his own

defense. No civilized human being likes to have his conscience so severely tested.

What counted, however, was the end result. As the Indians proved their capacity for peaceful resistance, they eventually won the respect of the British. Equally important, they came to respect themselves. "We cast off our fear," said Nehru, "and walked like men."

The climax of the Montgomery struggle, observers say, came when a Negro preacher, at a church celebration, read from First Corinthians: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things."

It is difficult to judge prospects for this program on a nationwide scale. Gandhi was not only a spiritual leader of depth, dedication and courage but also a political genius. In America much will depend on the ability of Negro leaders to develop similar conviction and skill under pressure. Even more will depend on the number, raw courage and dedication of their followers.

The two conditions which Gandhian leaders laid down for the success of their nonviolent approach certainly exist here in America. Whether it be in Little Rock or in Levittown, racial discrimination sorely troubles our national conscience.

The great majority of moderate whites in Montgomery were profoundly shocked by the bombing of Negro churches, the homes of several Negro ministers and of the one white minister who supported the boycott.

The requirement of a free press is also met. The countrywide attention paid to the Montgomery bus boycott demonstrates that the means of communication are ready to carry the news. The Federal Bill of Rights insures against the kind of terror that liquidates and crushes completely.

Only one thing is certain: if we are to achieve racial harmony in America, a great moral force of some kind must be created that will awaken our national conscience.

The Supreme Court has made its decision. Most leaders in both political parties agree that the law as it has now been defined must somehow be obeyed.

But pleas for law observance, however eloquent and however firmly supported in areas of crisis



by Federal troops, will never be sufficient in themselves. Laws which touch deep prejudices and emotions are not obeyed merely because they have been placed on the statute books and defined by the courts. They are obeyed only when a great majority of people come to believe they are right. Prohibition was clear evidence of this.

In a democratic community, Abraham Lincoln once said, "public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who moulds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed."

If we are to ease the racial conflict which so dangerously divides America in a world that is two-thirds colored, we must come to see it as a moral issue and not simply as a legal one. It is an issue involving no more and no less than the dignity of man. It can successfully be met only as the millions of good Americans who through generations of custom and prejudice have come to believe in the dignity of some men only are persuaded of their error.

Nowhere else in America does religious conviction run so deep as in the South. It was a white Southern minister who said about the racial problem, "There is just one question to ask: what would Christ do?"

Sooner or later, the South, and also, the North, East and West, will respond with the only Christian answer possible, for Christ came to show the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and He knows neither Gentile nor Jew, Greek nor barbarian, black nor white.

The Gandhian way of persuasion and change is designed to make a profound moral issue of this kind clear, to stir the conscience of the great decent majority who believe in the laws of God, and to persuade that majority to bring its actions into line with its beliefs.

"It may be through the Negroes," Gandhi once said, "that the unadulterated message of nonviolence will be delivered to the world."

This, it may be said, will take no less than a miracle of greatness. That is true. But we Americans are living in an age of miracles and we are capable of greatness.

You know that when Gandhi was told that Halifax never took a decision without praying, he replied effectively, "I wonder why God so consistently gives him the wrong advice?"

— John Kenneth Galbraith, former U. S. Ambassador to India, in a letter to the editor of this volume, April, 1968.

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# GIANI ZAIL SINGH REVEALS THE UNTOLD STORY

The irrepressible Giani is back at his favourite game. Stealing headlines.

This time, as the dust was about to settle on his controversial tenure as the country's first citizen, he has come up with the shocking claim that there were people who had offered him Rs 30 to 40 crores to stake his claim to the presidency for another term. The claim has, predictably, sparked off a fierce political controversy, with both congressmen and Opposition leaders demanding that he reveal the name or names of those who were involved in making such an offer and, thereby, trying to corrupt the electoral process for the highest office in the land.

The Giani has stubbornly refused. Silence being his best gambit to keep everyone guessing. Even as the rumour mills keep churning out different names—and speculation reaches a feverish pitch in the media.

Here, in yet another sensational conversation with the Weekly, Giani Zail Singh finally reveals what actually happened during his last turbulent days as President of India. He names those who came to him with bags of money and asked him to stand for office again. Those who tried to persuade him to dismiss the Rajiv Gandhi government and instal them instead, as prime minister. Even as they swore undying loyalty to their leader, who was besieged by the Bofors controversy and had no idea of how those around him were plotting his removal.

It is an incredible story of high theatrics and low intrigue that almost plunged the nation into disaster. It is the story of how some of Rajiv Gandhi's own men were, quietly and dangerously, working against him and had gone to an angry and bitter Zail Singh, hoping to persuade him to take the extreme step of sacking the prime minister and dismissing what was, unquestionably, a popularly elected government.

Here, the Giani tells Pritish Nandy and Rajat Sharma how and why he refused their enticements and chose to quietly step down from office. Instead of playing into the hands of these desperate men, each trying to manipulate himself into the prime minister's chair. He has no love lost for Rajiv Gandhi, that's clear. But he makes it equally clear that he had, also, no intention of handing over the reins of the nation to an usurper.

A breathtaking revelation of what actually happened and who the people involved were.

Giani Zail Singh loves controversies.

He loves controversies mainly because they steal him newspaper headlines and keep him on the centre-stage of Indian politics, even as better-known politicians than him have quietly faded out.

But there is one proviso to this. The Giani only loves those controversies where he is in control over events. Where he can steer the media to his advantage and emerge either as a martyr or as a master strategist: where his simplicity of heart or political wisdom is recognised and admired by all.

But this time it was different. The casual remark made by the Giani to a Delhi reporter, where he said that he had been offered Rs 30 to 40 crores to fight for a second term let loose a torrent of speculation in the political scenario, with reigning congressmen and the Opposition leaders trying desperately to pin the blame on each other. Accusations were traded in the media as well as on the floor of both houses of Parliament. Everyone started calling the other names. And the speculation as to who offered him these bags of cash forced the reluctant Giani, for once in his life, to try and retrace his steps.

This off the cuff remark would have gone unnoticed if it were not for the fact that PTI and Doordarshan picked it up and made so much brouhaha over it that even those editors who would have normally ignored what was a typical Giani comment were compelled to not just frontpage it but also editorialise on its implications for public morality. For, after all, the charge was very serious indeed. Someone had tried to corrupt the electoral process for the highest office in the land!

Of course, it was a casual remark. No money ever changed hands and the Giani, despite his obsessive pondering over whether or not to dismiss Rajiv Gandhi, never finally fought for a second term. He meekly stepped down at the appointed hour, having kept the ruling government on tenterhooks for several weeks. And having told virtually everyone who came to see him that he was calculating the odds for Rajiv's dismissal and seeking legal opinion on it.

Yet, the remark became all the more important when the prime minister who has earlier taken months to decide—Hamlet-like—whether or not to inquire into Bofors or the Bachchans took less than a moment to announce in Parliament that he was asking his home minister, the by now ubi-

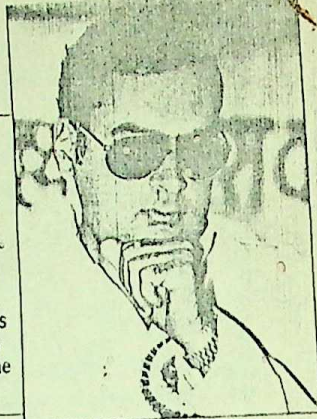


## THE LEAD CHARACTERS

Who were the key people during those dramatic days?



Giani Zail Singh, who felt humiliated by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's behaviour and was itching to get his back on him. Anyhow.

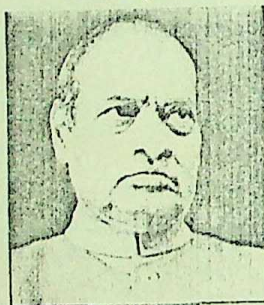


Rajiv Gandhi who didn't give a damn about the Giani and made it obvious to everyone. But he was certainly worried what the Giani would do.

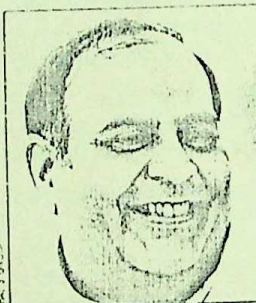


Chandra Swami, the richie-rich tantrik, who went to the Giani and offered him cash in exchange for Narasimha Rao named PM.

P V Narasimha Rao, who kept a low profile but pressed his candidature through Chandra Swami. He remains as a trusted Rajiv aide.



Arun Nehru, who was keen to embarrass Rajiv but didn't want to join ranks with Zail Singh to do so. He preferred to take a back seat.



Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who took on Rajiv Gandhi and got thrown out of the cabinet. He didn't trust the Giani and refused to play ball with him.



Balram Jakhar, who the Giani claims sent an emissary to him with a list of 45 MPs. Proposing that the Giani make him PM in exchange for a second term.

Arif Mohammed Khan, who the Giani is very fond of, tried his best to bring Singh, Nehru and the Giani together but failed. Singh was adamant.



Adnan Khashoggi, billionaire arms dealer and business partner of Chandra Swami. Why is he interested in Indian politics?



Arjun Singh sent his trusted bureaucrats to the Giani, with a list of 30/35 MPs. His offer was the same: Make me PM and I'll keep you as President.







R Venkataraman was being pushed upfront as the consensus candidate to replace Rajiv, but the PM got wind of this and offered him the presidency. He backed off.

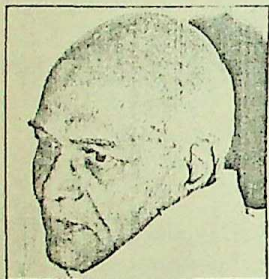


Vidya Charan Shukla planned the Venkataraman take-over and was most disappointed when Venkataraman, on being offered the presidency, backed out at the last minute.

Ashoke Sen, eminent lawyer and congressman, advised the Giani on whether he should or should not allow prosecution of Rajiv. The Giani says that Sen was not against it.

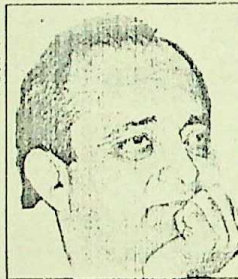


Ram Nath Goenka, the press baron, who backed the Giani to the hilt and tried to persuade him to throw out Rajiv during those tumultuous days.



S Gurumurthy, who went to see the Giani and offered to help him draft his letters to Rajiv. The Giani claims his draft came in too late. He had already sent his own version off.

Journalist Rajinder Puri, who sought permission to prosecute Rajiv, tried his best to persuade the Giani to give him the green light.



Narain Dutt Tiwari was approached but he was too scared. Leave me out of all this; he told the plotters. I can't bear the tension.



Ram Jethmalani had asked for permission to prosecute Rajiv but the Giani did not give it, after consulting ex-chief justice Chandrachud and Ashoke Sen.

Ex-chief justice Y V Chandrachud, claims the Giani, gave him a written opinion that the case was 50:50. He could have easily allowed prosecution.



quintous Buta Singh to order an inquiry that would investigate into the charges. Politically more subtle these days, Rajiv however took this opportunity to praise the Giani for making the offer public and bringing it to the attention of the government.

The Giani was taken aback. He had been caught on the wrong foot! He certainly had no intention to help Rajiv. Even his most recent interviews, several months after he had retired from the highest office in the land, revealed the Giani's intense bitterness towards the man he had once sworn into office. According to a very close associate of his, for the first time the Giani was a depressed—and somewhat confused—man, not knowing how to react to the way the press and his political rivals had picked up the chance remark and were trying to get the maximum mileage out of it.

Giani thought that if the Opposition were all set to make Bofors their election issue, he had unwittingly given Rajiv exactly what he was looking for. A corruption issue with which he could attack the Opposition—particularly the Jan Morcha and its leader, the latest Mr Clean, Vishwanath Pratap Singh.

So the Giani adopted his favourite technique. He started calling in all his friends—in the media as well as in political circles—to ask them what he should do. As all Giani-watchers know, this is his favourite gambit, to win friends and influence people. He seeks their opinion, their counsel—and, then, takes his own time to make up his mind as to what action he should take. His advisers feel that they are a participant in his decision-making process—and this feeds their ego. Perhaps they are. In all probability, they are not. But the Giani has this unerring skill to make each one feel that he or she has contributed an enormous amount to his making up his mind. To this extent, he is possibly the finest artist in the game of manipulating people and their usually over-sized egos.

So what did he decide? What did his friends advise him?

Within 24 hours of his initial discomfiture the Giani had figured out that Rajiv's ordering the inquiry was actually a double-edged weapon. Whereas the prime minister thought that he had cornered his wily opponent by asking for an investigation, the Giani discovered that this had given him a fantastic opportunity to get back into the political melee! He had become the focal point of political attention once again and could keep everyone guessing as to what step he would take next!

He told one of his friends: "Is





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**W**hy should I be scared? I openly told Rajiv: You can get me murdered if you want but you can't murder my authority as the President of India! Once I put it on paper, even if I am killed, my word will remain as law.

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ladke ne to mere haath mein tor de diya hai! fisko chahoon mar doon!”

Who offered the Giant Rs 30 to 40 crores? This became the crucial issue.

Everyone was back to running rings around the elder statesman, now quietly ensconced in his no longer so palatial residence at 3 Circular Road. Opposition leaders. Curious reporters. Even the odd congressman trying to strike a deal with the reluctant Giant.

When we arrived there, it was almost house full. Not to discuss politics but to watch the *Ramayan*. Or so the security guards told us, refusing entry till the latest episode in Ramanand Sagar's magnum opus was over. Even Narain Dutt Tiwari had been scheduled an audience only after the *Ramayan* was over, we were told by a rude Delhi Police constable in mufti.

We went off and came back later, to be greeted by a smiling Giant—the rose in his buttonhole missing for a change.

The morning's issue of *The Times of India* had carried a front-page story saying that the Giant had decided not to reveal the names of those who had offered him the bribe. The names will stay with me, he had been quoted as saying. Another daily had said that he was indignant: Why should I name my friends and well-wishers? A third had attributed to him the remark: Let Bala Singh's sleuths find it out!

These comments did not deter us. We knew that the Giant needed just that extra bit of persuasion to come out with the truth. After all, he had nothing to lose—and his credibility to regain by identifying what exactly happened on those fateful days in the summer of 87.

In any case, he had been talking off the record to a lot of his friends and associates: telling them near-identical stories of how so many people tried to entice him with money and offers of a second term if he were to dismiss Rajiv and instal them instead. He had confessed that many times he had felt tempted but had, eventually, refused to play along with them—concerned as he had been with the future of the nation and reluctant to dismiss a democratically-elected government. Rajiv's petulant behaviour hadn't helped. Nor did his aides who came to pacify the bitter and angry old man. Their arrogant behaviour had further alienated him. Yet, he loved to believe, that it was his trust in democracy and concern for the nation that held back his hand from signing that piece of paper which could have dismissed Rajiv's government overnight and dramatically altered the future course of our politics...



Gandhi and the Giant: with Jakhar and Venkataraman

Curiously, the Giant is now busy doing two things. One: writing his memoirs. Two: helping complete a film on his life. The secrets of his days in Rashtrapati Bhavan—the highlight of both the memoirs and the film—are now quietly surfacing.

The following excerpts from our conversation will also, hopefully, help pry open the Pandora's box of mysteries that so many people are still trying very desperately to keep shut. Because it involves them all. So many people within the Congress today, powerful and not so powerful. So many people in the Opposition as well...

Zail Singh's "revelations" here may shock many, surprise some and amuse others. They are carried in their entirety, not because we have checked the veracity of each and every claim that he makes, but because we believe that the Giant has the key to what actually transpired in those troubled days—and it is in the public interest that we carry what he said.

After all, let us not forget that Zail Singh was, for five long years, the country's first citizen...

*Today's Times of India says that you have decided not to reveal the names of those who tried to bribe you to fight for a second term as President. Is this true, Giantji?*

That is not correct. I don't know why they have written all this. I don't know why I am being dragged into all these irrelevant controversies.

*It was a private gathering... At the house of F M Khan?*

Yes. I was there, but I didn't speak a single word publicly. I don't know from where the journalist came. The press was not supposed to be there...

Girilal Jain is a good man. He is intelligent also and I like him. He has praised me on occasions. I don't know why they are now running this tirade against me, quite frankly. I said nothing.

*But you certainly said some very sensational things in your interview to Eetu Sarin.*

You see, there was this film being made on me. Shooting was on when she came to see me. I never thought that it was a serious interview. You know my habit: I never refuse to speak to a journalist. So I chatted with her and some things came up during the course of our informal conversation that were not meant to be quoted in the interview. Since I speak in Punjabi and the whole interview was conducted in that language, I suggested to her that she show me a draft so that there was no confusion later. While speaking, one makes a lot of remarks off the cuff—and I didn't want to get caught up in yet another controversy. But she didn't show me a draft—and that's how all this problem started.

Normally, you know, I never ask for drafts. I expect journalists to make their own decisions as to what should be used and what should be left out. But, in this case, since I didn't know her very well and she's a young person after all, I suggested she show me the text before sending it in. But, then, she





over now. Let me live in peace. I had occupied the highest office in the country. What more can I expect from life?

*But a man like you can't expect to live a private life. How can you say something was off the record or off the cuff? You have occupied the highest office in the land, you have been witness to so much happening around you...*

*How can you avoid speaking...* You are right, in a way. My life is an open book. I speak freely to intelligent people. Anyone who is intelligent can get anything out of me, very easily.

I leave to it to them to decide what is good for me and what is not. Journalists have rarely failed me. That's why I have asked my security people never to check them, to see if they have a tape recorder on them. I trust them.

*If you trust us, why don't tell us who offered you the money—Rs 30 or 40 crores or whatever?*

Wait for the right moment. Not now. I don't want any more trouble now.

*Are you worried about the inquiry by Bala Singh?*

Why should I be worried? No money ever changed hands. I did not stand for a second term. So what can he inquire into? All he can do is ask me who offered the money. And I'll refuse to disclose it. That will be the end of the inquiry. (Laughs)

*Did the Opposition offer to help you, to fight for the second term? Did they offer to raise money for you?*

I want to make one thing very

must have been in a hurry...

This particular remark—about the crores of rupees offered to me—was just a casual remark and was torn out of context by all those who were interested in injuring me. Even radio and television, who never carry anything about me, picked up this stray comment and publicised it. What could I do? It was an orchestrated effort.

*Why didn't you issue a statement to this effect?*

**So many people benefitted from all this. Someone became President of India. Someone got a much-desired chief ministership. Someone became a minister. And what did I get? Only controversies!**

How could I? I made the statement but it was off the record.

M J Akbar was wanting to interview me for a long time. But I avoided it because I knew he was on the other side. Akbar told me: You always give interviews to Pritish Nandy and Kuldip Nayar and Satinder Singh—but never to me. Why don't you give me a chance? I sidestepped the issue and kept talking of other things. You see, I don't want to get into any kind of controversy these days. It is all

clear: No one from the Opposition made any offer to me, as far as money is concerned. Nor did the dissident congressmen. Where do they have money? V P Singh even avoided seeing me. So did Arun Nehru. Arif knows the whole story. Why don't you go and ask him? He has no interest in hiding the truth...

*If you leave out the Opposition and the dissident congressmen group, that leaves only Rajiv's men. You are implying, in other words, that Rajiv's own men came*

*to you with bags of money...*

I'll reveal the truth one day and you'll be all surprised.

*But people are surprised how a presidential poll can require such a huge sum of money?*

Have you forgotten Giri's victory? How he became the President of India. In the first round, he was losing—but then what happened? How did he win?

I know everything. Don't forget I was then in charge of that entire operation, on behalf of Mrs Gandhi. She was determined to defeat Sanjiva Reddy and she managed that. How do you think she did it? Without any money?

There was an Akali government in Punjab. But the Akali MLAs voted for Giri. Charan Singh had so many votes in UP. There, the second preference votes were for our candidate. That's how Giri gained the lead in the second round. And you mean to say that all these votes came free?

How would Rajiv know about all this? He was not even in politics then. If he had asked me, I would have told him all this.

*Didn't he ask you anything about this when he came to see you on the day of Holi?*

No, he didn't talk about politics then. Aise hi general baten hoti rahin. Aur kya hona tha?

*Why did he come on the day of Holi?*

Just to greet me. He comes every year. That is a tradition.

This year, the only political talk we had was about Sri Lanka.

*What did he say?*

Nothing very much. And he came with a television crew. Camera, lights, everything. But, in the evening, when I saw the news, I realised that they had cut out everything. Nothing was shown.

This Gopi Arora is a very clever man. He must have ensured the excision.

*Did Rajiv discuss Punjab with you?*

What use is discussing anything with me when they go ahead and do whatever they want? If they had listened to me, the Punjab problem would have been solved a long time back. But, then, that's another matter! (Sighs)

*But, in any case, it was a good gesture on the part of Rajiv to come and meet you on Holi. And he praised you in Parliament also...*

Yes, face to face, he is always very polite and nice. He has a very innocent face. Like a child. That is why I trusted him so much in the beginning.

*You have said you made him the prime minister because you owed everything to Mrs Gandhi.*

She also owed me a lot. Our relationship was not just one way. I



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**his (Chandra) Swami said he knows some Sultan. He claimed to have so much money available. He wanted me to contest for the second time. Somehow this fellow had a dislike for Rajiv. Perhaps because Rajiv refused to encourage him.**

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One

thing is certain:  
Chandra Swami is very  
close to Narasimha Rao.  
And, after all, my own  
relationship with  
Narasimha Rao is also  
good. He is a senior man,  
quiet but shrewd. (Uska)  
naam to zaroor chalay  
tha.

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was her home minister; you must remember that. I did so much for her. It was a question of give and take.

But I could trust her. She also trusted me.

With Rajiv, it's not the same thing. He says one thing and does exactly the opposite.

At least now you can reveal why you did not dismiss him. What stopped you?

He came and told me: *Jo hua woh bhool jao*. Let bygones be bygones. He seemed sincerely penitent and so I decided to bury the differences.

For me, the nation's interest is always supreme.

I thought and thought and, then, decided not to dismiss him.

But I could have allowed Ram Jethmalani and Rajinder Puri to prosecute him. That may have been a mistake. After all, the court should have decided whether he was guilty or not. For a prime minister, it is important that people believe he is honest.

The courts could have dismissed the cases. Or they could have judged him guilty. I would have done my duty in allowing the prosecution.

I had examined the papers very carefully. I had sought the opinions of Y V Chandrachud and Ashoke Sen. They are very learned people. Both said that it was a borderline case—50:50—and I should have perhaps allowed them to proceed...

Did you get their opinions in writing?

Yes.

Both felt that you could allow prosecution?

Yes. I still have their opinions with me.

Chandrachud's opinion was very clear.

And Ashoke Sen's?

He was also very specific—but I had asked him a different question.

Despite such specific opinions which you say you have in writing with you, why didn't you grant permission for prosecution? Were you scared?

Why should I be scared? I openly told Rajiv: You can get me murdered if you want but you can't murder my authority as the President of India! Once I put it on paper, even if I am killed, my word will remain as law.

It is so easy for the government to kill me, if they want. As it is there were people who were accusing me of harbouring terrorists in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Those who were guarding me were also their men. Was it difficult for them to fake an encounter where I could have accidentally got killed? Or they could have killed me and blamed the terrorists! Who would have



Swami and Narasimha Rao: a peculiar nexus, growing over the years

disbelieved them? After all, I am on top of the terrorists' hit-list.

But I am not scared. If I was scared, I would not have so openly come out in support of Mrs Gandhi's Operation Bluestar. Mind you, she never consulted me before taking such a drastic action—I would have persuaded her against it. But, once it was done, I lent her all my support and risked my entire life for it. Today, I am a prisoner out here—surrounded by security guards all the time, wherever I am, wherever I go. Is this a life to live?

I could have been a free man today if I had wanted.

I was very hurt, I had tears in my eyes and yet I went out there and supported her. Imagine what would have happened if I had backed out! It was not just out of my loyalty to her. It was my concern for the people of India that gave me strength to stand up. Today, why should I be scared of Rajiv?

You still sound very angry with him?

He's a thankless man. I made him prime minister but he was ungrateful all through. In the end I forgave him because he came to me with folded hands and an innocent face—but *woh sudhra nahin*.

They spread stories about me. That I had been bought. That my daughter was being given a Rajya Sabha seat, I was being given a mansion to live in. I told them. I could have, as easily, lived in a *jhapi*. I can live like a fakir. I don't need anything from them.

Now, they are spreading fresh canards. They are saying crores have been given to me. I haven't even received thousands, leave alone crores. My pension is so small that I can hardly live within it. But I never complain. I get only Rs 1000 a month to run my secretariat—whereas I get over 500 letters every month, to which I reply to at least 300. Ambassadors and



foreign dignitaries come to visit me. How can I afford all this within an amount that was determined during Rajendra Prasad's time? Why can't the government change its rules? After all, there are only two ex-Presidents.

Sanjeeva Reddy once complained to me, when I was the President, and I had recommended the matter to them. They promised to look into it but, eventually, did nothing. That is the way the government behaves!

*But you have friends in the cabinet? Friends who were, it is rumoured, willing to stand by you during your confrontation with Rajiv.*

Once Rajiv asked me directly: You have said that seven of my ministers are against me. Is it true? Since I can't lie, I confessed having said so. So he asked who they were.

I said: Since you have never asked me about anything else, why are you asking me about this? How can I tell you their names? You

mutual contacts. I was cautious and spoke to Mrs Gandhi. She said: Avoid him.

During the conversation, he had dropped many names. Names of big people like Atal Behari Vajpayee, Chandra Shekhar, Narasimha Rao, Romesh Bhandari, Natar Singh, Madhevsinh Solanki, and many others. So I checked with my intelligence people. They came back to me and confirmed that his claims were right. He was actually very close to all these people.

That's the first time he got in touch with me.

*After that? What about rumours that he tried to orchestrate the dismissal of Rajiv?*

He saw me only once when I was in Rashtrapati Bhavan.

*Are you sure? Only once?*

Yes, we met with Gurumurthy...

*It is said that he induced you to write the letter to Rajiv...*

Not at all. This is not correct. I had already made up my mind to write the letter. Chandra Swami

ones I made in my draft. Because I had opened my mind to him.

Gurumurthy's draft came, in fact, one day after I had sent off my letter to the prime minister. I did not want to release this letter to the press. I had thought of giving the news of it being sent to some friends. *The Times of India* was my first choice. But, suddenly, the letter was published in the *Indian Express*. There was a confusion about the last paragraph. It was different from the letter actually sent to Rajiv. That's why the text of the letter that appeared in *The Hindu* was different from that of the *Indian Express*. In fact, a Gujarati paper was the first to...

*Sandesh?*

Yes, Chandra Swami perhaps told them about it. An unnecessary controversy broke out over the letter. It was not at all my intention to create problems for Rajiv in the press. You see, I am a simple-hearted man. But, then, there are people who go out of the way to do mischief. What can I do about it?

I must tell you another thing. I am not good at English. So I ask my friends and advisers to prepare the drafts. Whenever there is any doubt in my mind, I want to think about it again and again. Even if the letter is very urgent, I take two or three hours before signing it. In fact, I prefer to keep such letters pending overnight. I read them at night before I go to sleep and, then, read them again in the morning before sending them off. Often, I change my mind. This habit has always kept me away from committing mistakes.

You see, I am always open in my conversations but not in my writing. I am constrained by my lack of English.

*Did Chandra Swami come to you as an emissary of Narasimha Rao?*

There were so many people, so many emissaries in those days! I never said no to anybody. My doors were always open. There were so many ambitious people...

*And some of them came with bags of money?*

No, no. No one actually brought me any money. But there were many commitments made. You know how people speak.

This Swami said he knows some Sultan. He claimed to have so much money available. He wanted me to contest for the second time. Somehow, this fellow had a dislike for Rajiv. Perhaps because Rajiv refused to encourage him. (Laughs) But what can I tell you about this? You know everything about him. Yours was the first story.

*So it was the Swami who offered you the crores?*

One thing is certain: He is very



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*oh to darpok aadmi hain. When Yitwari's name was mentioned by some people, he came running to me. He requested me with folded hands to keep him out of all this. He said: Please don't involve me in all this.*

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YITWARI

**A**ctually a junior minister came and offered me money to name Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Arun Nehru, Shukla and Arif. I laugh at them. They think I can be bought. It's foolish! Money is immaterial to me.

should get your own intelligence service to find out.

Yes, there were many people among his own who were trying to dislodge him. The bigger ones approached me. So did the smaller fry as well. Some of them are still ministers in his cabinet. Others occupy even higher office, in Parliament and in the states. Some of them have just become ministers in the latest reshuffle. I don't want to name them—particularly the small fry—for they will lose their jobs. As for the big ones, Rajiv himself should be knowing by now who they are. His intelligence people should be giving him all the information.

*But the intelligence people haven't even got enough on Chandra Swami, we are told. Do you know the man?*

I have met him only once.

*Once?*

Well, I had once met him earlier when I was the home minister.

He approached me through some

came to me with one lawyer...

*Gurumurthy?*

Yes, yes—that was the man. But I had already drafted the letter. I had been thinking about it for a long time. I did not want the prime minister to get away with what he had been saying about the President. It is my habit to think about any important decision I make. I discuss it with my friends and well-wishers. This Swami had learnt from one of my friends that I was thinking of writing a letter to Rajiv. He came with this lawyer and said that he had some interesting points which could be incorporated in the letter.

I asked him to give me his suggestions.

By the time he came to me with his suggestions, I had already drafted the letter with the help of Joginder Singh Wasu. I have known him since my days in Punjab. He was the advocate general. The points made in Gurumurthy's draft were almost the same as the





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**W**ell, there was Chaudhury Balram. He is a very rich man, a big and powerful landlord. He sent me this list of 45 MPs who were with him. He also staked his claim... He sent me word through this MP, Bagri.

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close to Narasimha Rao.

And, after all, my own relationship with Narasimha Rao is also good. He is a senior man, quiet, but shrewd.

*Did Chandra Swami expect anything in return for his crores?*

Nothing is ever given for nothing.

*Did he ask for Narasimha Rao to be sworn in as prime minister?*

Naam to zaroor chalaya tha.

*What did you say?*

I listened to him.

*Did he follow up the matter with you?*

He did not come personally every time but his secretary—a chap called Agarwal—used to come with all the proposals. He is a very, very clever man. *Wohi sab hisaab rakhta hai.*

*Why did you turn them away?*

They were not the only people. There were so many people coming and going in those days. Everyone had some kind of a proposal.

*With crores?*

No, no. Not everyone has his kind of money and contacts.

*Who were these people who came?*

Rajiv's ministers. Well-known congressmen. What else?

*Opposition leaders too? Dissident congressmen with bags of money?*

Where do these chaps have money? Money is available only when you are in power.

*Did Narain Dutt Tiwari come? People have described him as a pretender to the throne and there were many rumours flying around in those days that senior congressmen were considering him as a replacement candidate in case Rajiv stepped down or was asked to step down by the party?*

*Woh to darpok aadmi hain.* When his name was mentioned by some people, he came running to me. He requested me with folded hands to keep him out of all this. He said: I am happy wherever I am. Please don't involve me in all this.

He is a very sweet man, a friend of everybody. He doesn't fight. He had come to me even this morning.

*Why? To find out, on behalf of Rajiv, who offered you the crores?*

No, no, no. He only came to wish me for Holi. He wasn't here that day. He never forgets these court-sies.

*You also never do...*

*During those days you met everyone and gave them time, perhaps a little bit of encouragement...*

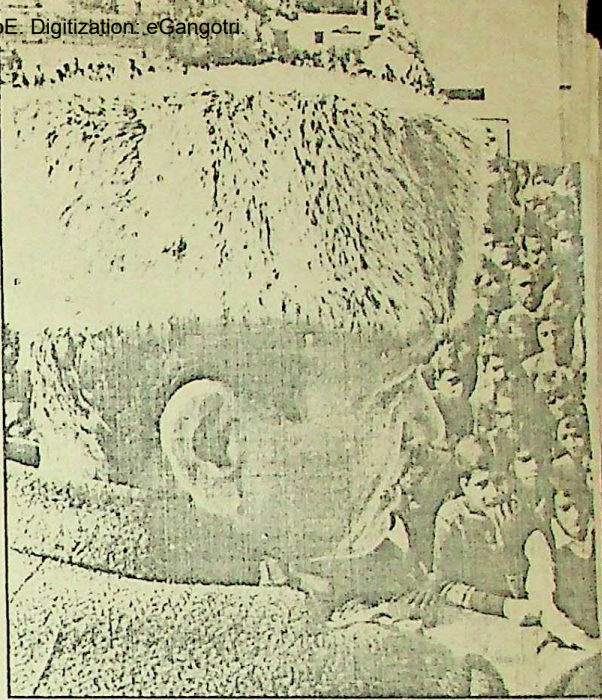
I always meet everyone...

*Who else approached you in those days?*

So many people...

So many...

Like?



Singh and Nehru: not guilty! says the Giant

Well, there was Chaudhury Balram. He is a very rich man, a big and powerful landlord. He sent me this list of 45 MPs who were with him. He also staked his claim...

*Personally!*

No, he sent me word through this MP, Bagri.

*Maniram Bagri?*

Haan. He's an Opposition man.

Not everyone came to see me personally. Most sent their friends and emissaries to me—with lists of MPs.

*Like?*

Arjun Singh sent me a list of 30/35 MPs who were with him.

*Whom did he send?*

One IAS officer.

*Who was this officer?*

Once Rajiv asked me directly: You have said that seven of my ministers are against me. Is it true? Since I can't lie, I confessed having said so. So he asked me who they were. I said: Get your own intelligence service to find out.

But very close to the Chaudhury...

*But how do you know he was acting on behalf of Jakhra? He may have come on his own and lied to you—just to embarrass the person.*

I know who came on whose behalf. I have known all these people for ages and their contacts. Don't forget I have been part and parcel of the same party.

And what's wrong with being ambitious? Why blame him alone? In those days, everyone was angling for the number one position.

*Why? Who else came to see you?*

Why don't you leave him out of this? Why do you want to hurt these small people? Poor fellow will lose his job if his name comes out.

*Is this the same IAS officer who accompanies him wherever he is posted? Bhopal; Chandigarh; New Delhi.*

No, no, no. It's not fair. I won't name him.

*He would just walk in and see you with his boss' proposals?*

He used other people's cars to come. Actually, he would come in a journalist's car. Another journal-



fore



ist leaked this to the prime minister's house. (Laughs)

But Arjun Singh is very clever. As soon as he suspected that Rajiv had come to know what he was up to he did a somersault and spread word that he was sending his people to snoop around and find out what I was up to.

There were so many people who

never took place?

**Vishwanath Pratap Singh?**  
*Those were his glorious days.*

*Ajeeb aadmi hain.* He is a meek man. Also too careful. He didn't even respond to the overtures. In fact, earlier, when he was shifted to the defence ministry, he was very disturbed. He came to see me, but didn't discuss anything of any con-

**T**oday,  
I am a prisoner out here—surrounded by security guards all the time, wherever I am, wherever I go. Is this a life to live? I could have been a free man today if I had wanted to.

did somersaults in those days!

One young MP was a regular visitor. He even promised to produce a list of over 100 MPs sup- anybody I appoint as the prime minister. But he had one condition: that he should be included as a minister in the new government.

But see the irony! He has recently become a minister in Rajiv's government!

Don't insist on asking his name. But if you had dismissed Rajiv, who would you have ideally preferred as prime minister?

Why talk about something that

sequence.

He is really a strange man!

**So who was your ideal choice?**

There was no ideal choice. There was no choice made eventually either.

But, if you ask me, the best man was Venkataraman. He would have made a good prime minister...

There was some talk of him also throwing his hat into the ring.

*Woh sab baat chhor do.* He is occupying the highest office today.

**Did he show any interest himself?**

First of all, he was the senior-

most minister and respected by all. He has all the qualities of occupying the prime minister's office. He had met some people who I don't want to name. They showed him all the papers related to corruption charges against Rajiv. He was in a dilemma. He knew that Rajiv did not like him. He also knew that Rajiv had decided to make Shankararaman the President. He was upset over it. At one stage he had agreed to become the prime minister, but he never told me this directly.

Since I was not keeping well, he came to see me. But we did not discuss the subject. In fact, once the news of his being in touch with decadents was leaked, he was offered the presidency and that was the end of it, as far as Venkataraman was concerned.

(Laughs) See, so many people benefitted from all this. Someone became President of India. Someone got a much desired chief ministership. Someone became a minister. And what did I get? Only controversies!

**Offers of crores too? (Jokingly)**

Actually, a junior minister came and offered me money to name Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Arun Nehru, V C Shukla and Arif. I laugh at them. They think I can be bought.

It's foolish!

You can buy me with respect and love. Money is immaterial to me. I am prepared to live like a fakir. All I need is a chance to serve the people of this country.

Unfortunately, all I got is this *shararat*. Not by Rajiv, but by his people. And all over such a small quote torn out of context!

What is 30 or 40 crores? People who are in power have much more money. They can say anything, do anything they want. I did nothing wrong. My conscience is clear. I didn't take any money. I didn't even dismiss Rajiv. So what is this controversy all about? Just a casual comment made in passing.

**Some people say even Shiv Shankar wanted to become prime minister...**

He was not even considered by anyone. What support does he have? Does he have any MPs?

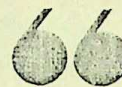
No, I don't think he even thought of it. He can't even get himself elected from his home state!

*Chhoro yeh sab baat. Bahut ho gayee. Aur sunao aap ka kya haal hai? Magazine kaisa chal raha hai?*

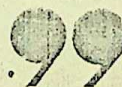
*Thik hai...*

**People want to know what you feel about this controversy.**

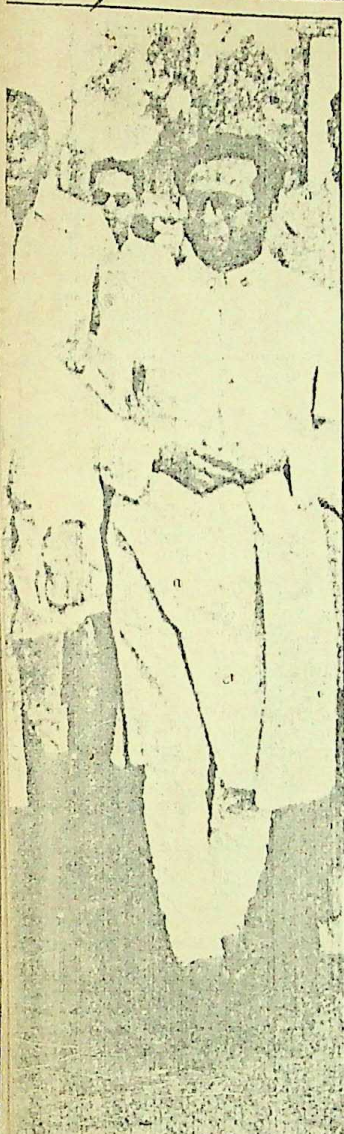
I have told you so many things. All of them are not for printing—so use your judgement, your discretion. You are friends of mine and you should know what is good for me and what is not...



**A**rjun Singh  
sent me a list  
of 30/35 MPs who were  
with him. But he is very  
clever. As soon as he  
suspected that Rajiv had  
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Ahmed Mohiuddin, his clan is split into two camps.

Ranged on one side are Najma Heptullah, grand-niece of the maulana and Congress-I parliamentarian, and her cousin, filmmaker Nasir Husain, who want the maulana's papers—currently deposited at the National Archives, New Delhi, and the National Library, Calcutta—returned to them. And opposing them, at least tangentially if not frontally, are Jayati Leila Kabir, daughter of the maulana's amanousis, Humayun Kabir, and Baqar Husain, grand-nephew of the maulana and elder

Longmans, because 30 pages were held back under the maulana's express instruction. A set each of these pages was to be deposited in the National Archives and with the National Library, and were only to be released 30 years after his death. And in the release and publication of these papers lies the controversy.

In several respects the book is a frank critique of some of the maulana's peers in the political arena who could have prevented the division of the country but failed to do so. The maulana himself, till the very end, remained

be written in English to reach a wider audience. He recruited the erudite Humayun Kabir, a close associate of his, to help him in the composition of the work.

The maulana's narrative in Urdu was to be translated into English by Kabir and later corrected by the author. However, the maulana passed away on February 22, 1958, before his work could be published. The book was finally brought out by Orient Longmans, in January the following year, and it turned out to be a best-seller, with 20,000 copies being sold on the day it hit the market.

Not since M O Mathai withheld his controversial chapter 'She' in his book detailing his tenure with Jawaharlal Nehru, has any literary work aroused so much controversy as the impending publication of the completed version of Maulana Azad's memoirs. An edited version of the book was published in January 1959, ten months after the maulana had passed away. But 30 pages of the manuscript were unpublished. They were made into two complete sets and preserved at the National Archives, New Delhi and the National Library, Calcutta, to be released three decades after his death.

Now, on the occasion of his 30th death anniversary, which fell on February 22, there is a legal battle over the papers. It has been initiated by some of his heirs led by Congress-I parliamentarian Najma Heptullah and film-maker Nasir Husain who are questioning the right of the publishers, Orient Longmans, to print the complete manuscript. They believe that the papers belong to them, and not to the publishers, even though Orient Longmans have been given the first option to them under the original contract.

In the public interest, Leila Kabir, daughter of Humayun Kabir, who transcribed and translated the memoirs and signed the publishing contract, has now joined issue. She avers that the papers should be immediately released to the nation—bypassing the publishers if necessary—in order to reach the widest possible audience. They belong to the nation and not to any family, she believes.

And with so much interest being generated by the unpublished papers, speculation has begun to mount about what they actually contain.

Do they detail the maulana's disagreements with Nehru? Do they contain critiques of Sardar Patel and Krishna Menon, personages who were never close to the maulana?

On these pages Anuradha Dutt profiles the widening controversy over Maulana Azad's manuscripts.

**F**or a freedom fighter who strove until the last moment to preserve the unity of the subcontinent, it must be galling to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to find his family divided over the issue of his papers. Three decades after his death and in his birth centenary year which begins in November, instead of joining the nation in commemorating the memory of the maulana, whose little-known but real name was

brother of Nasir Husain. And at the heart of the matter is 30 pages from the original draft of the maulana's book, *India Wins Freedom*, which was held back on his instructions.

*India Wins Freedom*, was written over a period of two years in the late fifties and was intended to be the maulana's assessment of the momentous events which culminated in the partition of the subcontinent. The entire opus was not published posthumously by Orient

passionate advocate of the cause of a united India, where all communities could live in amity. The trauma of partition naturally embittered him and in *India Wins Freedom*, he expressed his perceptions of that phase of history.

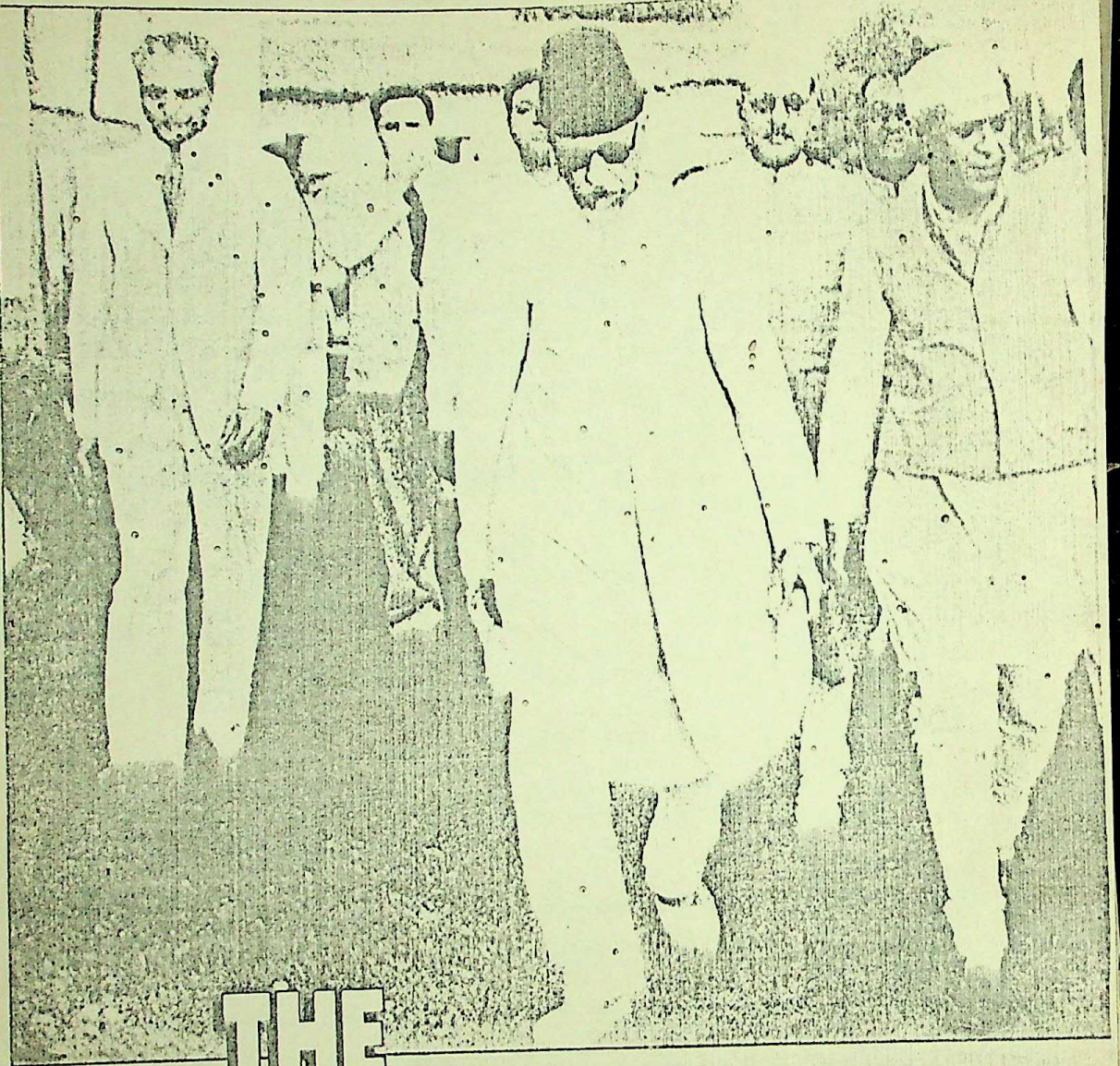
The Kabir connection arose because Maulana Azad, who was an erudite Urdu scholar, with an enviable mastery over the Islamic scriptures, wanted his version of India's independence struggle to

In his preface to the book written on March 15, 1958, Kabir says: 'He (Maulana Azad) directed that a copy each of the complete text should be deposited under sealed cover in the National Library, Calcutta, and the National Archives, New Delhi. He was, however, anxious that the exclusion of these passages should not in any way alter either the outline of his picture or his general findings. I carried out the changes according



THE WEEKLY COVER STORY

ANURADHA DUTT



# THE AZAD PAPERS

THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA, MARCH 6, 1958



Najma Heptullah's collusion with her relatives to stop the publication of the Azad papers and gain proprietorship rights over them, appears to have acquired political overtones. The speculation in this regard is that as an active Congress-I parliamentarian, who had formerly been vice chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, and AICC general secretary, she is somewhat wary about the precise nature of the contents of the unpublished 30 pages. Since discretion is the virtue most valued by the ambitious, she perhaps feels it would be more prudent to avert any embarrassing disclosures about the maulana's peers, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru, should this happen to be the case.

While Heptullah herself dismisses these reports as preposterous, sources close to the relatives reveal that the entire exercise of obtaining a stay order against the release of the complete book was master-minded by her, with film-maker Nasir Husain functioning as a front. It is possible that the motive for filing the petition, to which she and seven of her relatives are party, is purely one of asserting familial rights. Then again, the

haste with which the injunction was obtained at the last moment, betrays an urgency that might suggest other compulsions.

Queried as to why the relatives kept quiet for so many years and only decided to protest on the eve of the release of the complete book, she says, "We, the family members, respected the will, whoever's it was—whether it was the maulana's will or Humayun Kabir's

will or whoever's will. The will was respected for 30 years. We are not the sort of people to make a fuss about it. We are all decent people. And Panditji was in the know of things. So we respected everybody's sentiments and kept quiet. When it was decided that the documents should be kept in the National Archives or National Library, for 30 years, we abided by the decision. But now, my cousins and I feel that we are the inheri-

tors, so we should have a right to be in the picture too. That's all."

Reacting to the charge that she was against the publication of the papers for political reasons, Heptullah counters, "How does it affect me? I didn't write them. I'm very, very small fry compared to my grandfather and his associates. What my grandfather wrote was solely his view. How am I affected by it? His book is there. What more can 30 pages add, really? I'm not the only one in the family. I'm the only one of them in politics perhaps..."

Heptullah's argument that her motives are not political are based on the fact that the contents of the controversy-ridden 30 pages are so far merely a matter of speculation. "One doesn't even know what is in those pages. Whether it is critical or whether it is giving credit to anybody, one doesn't know. So how can it affect me or anybody until we know the contents of the papers?" she asks.

But then, sceptics might point out, politics is essentially the art of anticipation. And it certainly cannot be to Heptullah's disadvantage to be on her guard.

## 'WHAT MORE CAN 30 PAGES ADD?'

Najma Heptullah asks Anuradha Dutt, reacting to the controversy

to his instructions and was able to present to Maulana Azad the revised and abridged draft towards the end of November 1957.

Consequently, shortly after the book was completed, and after Azad's death, Kabir had written to the director of the National Archives in a letter dated March 25, 1958: "When the text was ready, he (Maulana Azad) felt that there were judgments on recent events as well as men still living or recently dead which were not yet ripe for publication. At the same time he felt that he would like to leave for the future historian a record of events and his appreciation of developments in Indian politics during this period. He therefore asked me to preserve the complete text in sealed covers and hand it over to the National Archives, New Delhi, with instructions that the seal is not to be broken till 30 years after his death."

That is how the National Archives and the National Library have in their custody not 30 sealed pages but the complete work including the portions that were expurgated in the published version. Though it was Maulana Azad's wish that the book should appear in November 1958, to synchronise with his seventieth birthday, he died before that. This was the reason why it

was left to Kabir, as the 'composer' of the work, to sign the memorandum of agreement with the publisher.

The contract for the publication of *India Wins Freedom* was drawn up by Kabir and Orient Longmans Pvt Ltd (now known as Orient Longmans Ltd) on September 2, 1958. In the memorandum of agreement, Kabir is referred to as 'the composer', and the complete book, including the expurgated portions, as 'the work'. Fatima Begum of Shirin Nadi, Bhopal, sister of the maulana, and Nooruddin Ahmed, his nephew, are mentioned as the 'sole heirs' to half the royalties for the Indian publication. The payment of royalties on the Indian publication are detailed as below:

A royalty on the Indian published price of all copies sold, wherever sold of 15 per cent to be paid... (i) one half ... to the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (as directed by the composer) for the purpose of awarding annually two prizes; one for the best essay in English on Islam to be written by a non-Muslim citizen of India or Pakistan below thirty years of age and the other to a Muslim citizen of India or Pakistan of less than thirty years of age for the best essay in English on Hinduism. (ii) the other half of

the royalties to be paid to Fatima Begum and Nooruddin Ahmed in equal shares.

The royalties accorded to ICCR were, in reality, the share of Kabir, who was the minister for scientific research and cultural affairs in the Union government at the time he signed the contract. His munificent gesture stemmed from the fact that the maulana was the moving spirit behind the ICCR, which he envisioned as an agency to bring about greater cooperation and spread the spirit of fraternity between the peoples of India and Pakistan. As Kabir wrote in his preface referred to earlier: "I feel that there can be no better use of any income derived from this book than to make it available to the council for promoting better understanding among the different communities which live in India and Pakistan. Apart from a share to be paid to his nearest surviving relatives, royalties from this book will therefore go to the council for the annual award."

What is the quantum of royalties paid out to the inheritors? Leila, Kabir's successor-in-interest, told the *Weekly* that she had contacted Lalit Mansingh, the ICCR chairman, for details of the royalty payments but he declined to give her any information on the revenues on the book since 1959, the year of its publication. According

to him, the matter was a contractual one between the publisher and the late Humayun Kabir alone.

The maulana's heirs, reportedly have been getting their share of the royalties, though the precise amount is not known. Of the two mentioned in the memorandum of agreement, only Nooruddin Ahmed, who now lives in Calcutta, is still alive. He is the posthumous son of Azad's elder brother, Mohammad Yaseen, and lived with the maulana till his death. He is completely isolated now from the other relatives. He receives 25 per cent of the amount meant for the heirs. Fatima Begum, who was the elder sister of Azad, died on April 13, 1966. She had four children of whom the only surviving member in Salia Begum who lives in Lucknow. The grandchildren of Fatima Begum include Baqar Husain, Anous Jahan Begum, Bilquis Khan, Nasir Husain, Tahir Husain, all the offspring of Anna Begum, now deceased, Najma Heptullah, Rajya Sabha member, daughter of Yusuf Ali, deceased, and Naheed Siddiqui, daughter of Hamid Ali, also deceased.

However, it is not the monetary aspect which is at stake in the current controversy but the primacy of rights of the different factions involved. And the kick-off in the legal battle was the serving of a notice on Orient Longmans by





Heptullah, Safia Begum and Naheed Siddiqui on February 13, '88 contending that the contract signed by Kabir with the publishers 30 years ago was not valid, and that the company would have to negotiate afresh with the Maulana's heirs.

"We are the heirs of Maulana Azad and it is but natural that his papers should come to us—and not to some publishers who have signed a contract with a third party 30 years ago," says Heptullah.

**H**eptullah's tenuous argument for revoking the contract was given a fillip when her Bombay based cousin, film magnate Nasir Husain flew to Delhi, to express his solidarity. As Nasir Husain puts it succinctly: "We are the right people to decide whether those 30 pages should be published or not... because it is our property and we will decide about this."

Predictably E Raghavan, general manager of the Hyderabad headquartered Orient Longmans is not impressed with the arguments of the Najma Heptullah-Nasir Husain combine. "There is no question of Orient Longmans negotiating with anyone. The book is our property as long as the contract is there and the book is in print. The Maulana's heirs can only sue us if we have not paid them their royalty," states Raghavan categorically.

But what should essentially have been a square-off between the publishers and the heirs got entangled with Leila Kabir's concern to ensure the authenticity of the papers sealed by her father. Leila's interest was triggered off by the lackadaisical attitude of the custodians of the documents when queried about the details of a special ceremony to be held on February 22 to mark the release of the sealed papers. Dr R K Porti, director of the National Archives, professed ignorance of the entire affair and asked Leila to approach the department of culture.

At a meeting on February 10 with S Tripathi, joint-secretary, department of culture, where Porti was also present, she was astonished to hear that the second sealed lot of papers, deposited in Calcutta at the National Library, were to be flown to Delhi and both sets were to be opened in Delhi. Fearing, quite justly, that tampering with the controversial sealed material would be easier if they were both in one place, Leila filed a petition in the Calcutta high court on February 18, staying the transfer of the sealed papers and asking for their release before any-

## THE DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Who are the main characters in the current controversy over the publication of Maulana Azad's papers?



**MAULANA AZAD**

Wrote his memoirs *India Wins Freedom* but withheld 30 pages of the manuscript for publication 30 years after his death. These papers are at the heart of the controversy.

**NAJMA HEPTULLAH**  
Grand-niece of Maulana Azad and Congress-I parliamentarian who is spearheading the campaign by the family to prevent publication of the papers by challenging the validity of the original contract.



**BAQAR HUSAIN**

Brother of Nasir Husain who is the chief dissenting voice in the family as he believes that Maulana Azad's papers belong to the entire nation and ought to be published.

**HUMAYUN KABIR**

Translated and drafted *India Wins Freedom*. Also deposited the 30 controversial pages with the National Archives and the National Library and signed the contract for publication of the book.



**JAYATI LEILA KABIR**

Daughter of Humayun Kabir, fears that transfer of papers from Calcutta to Delhi could compromise the authenticity of the documents and wants them to be immediately released to preclude mischief.



**NASIR HUSAIN**

Film magnate and cousin of Najma who believes that the Maulana's papers are family property and that it is for the family members to decide whether they ought to be published or not.







ment historians in court.  
"For me, it is not a question of monetary interests, but of principles. The transfer of Maulana Azad's papers from Calcutta to Delhi is absurd and shocking, especially since it violates the very

## AGAINST ALL ODDS

Portrait of a patriot who had an unshakable faith in the unity of the subcontinent

*Some stars have fallen, but how does it matter?  
The sun is still shining bright.  
Let us borrow some beams  
To illuminate the dark alleys  
which badly yearn for light.*  
—Maulana Azad

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was the quintessential Muslim savant who, imbued with nationalistic zeal, put his distinctive impress on the freedom struggle. Indeed, at a time when partition was inevitable, few of his peers were as consumed with the passion of keeping the country united as the maulana. And, despite his myriad achievements, he is best remembered today for his endeavours in trying to prevent the division of the subcontinent and for his efforts in spreading the gospel of fraternity between India and Pakistan.

A large share of the maulana's catholic views and global concerns were an outgrowth of his family's tradition of scholarship and the fact that he was shaking the dust off his feet at an age

when others were about to venture on their first journeys. The maulana, whose real name was Mohiuddin Ahmed, was born in Mecca in 1888, where his father, Maulana Khairuddin, a distinguished scholar, had migrated some years earlier from Calcutta.

After spending his early years in Mecca, Ahmed came to Calcutta with his parents where he was tutored at home in Persian, science and philosophy.

A brilliant student, Ahmed finished his final education at 16. Earlier, he wrote Urdu poetry, reviewed articles and even edited a magazine, *Al-Nadva*. In 1908 when he was 20, he set out to visit the centres of learning in Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Turkey and France. He could not visit England due to the death of his father, an event which necessitated his return to India.

Given his background, it was inevitable that Ahmed's spirit of nationalism, which was kindled when he joined a group of revolutionaries in Bengal,

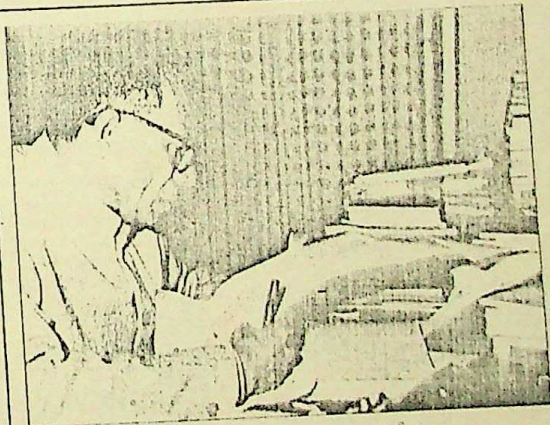
should find expression in journalism. At a time when Muslim leaders were wondering if they should participate in the freedom struggle, Ahmed started the famed Urdu weekly *Al-Hilal* (The Crescent) from Calcutta in 1912, which scaled amazing peaks of popularity in a short time. His pseudonym was Abul Kalam Azad, with the Pen and Freedom being his middle name and surname respectively. This *nom de plume* stuck on, and few ever remembered him by his real name.

In order to curb the strident anti-British editorial policy of the weekly, the government made demands of deposits which kept increasing each time. Yet Ahmed kept paying. Finally, the British confiscated his press after World War I

intention my late father had in having them kept apart," says an agitated Leila who has incurred a lot of expense to ensure that "the wishes of both Maulana Azad and my father are fulfilled".

Leila's stay was granted the following day by Justice Bhagabati Prasad Banerjee of the Calcutta high court who fixed a date of hearing, curiously on February 22, which also happened to be Humayun Kabir's 82nd birth anniversary. So Ashin Dasgupta, director of the National Library in Calcutta, who was preparing to fly out to New Delhi with the sealed papers, put them back in the archives, where he decided they ought to remain until the legalities were unscrambled.

Even if Leila was all for publication of the sealed documents, her plea for a simultaneous but separate release to the public in both Delhi and Calcutta to prevent any mischief, went against the financial interest of Orient Longmans who wanted the release to be exclusive to them. In effect, Leila's legal actions went down well with Najma Heptullah and Nasir Husain. The cousins, who wanted to assert their proprietary rights over the papers, were determined not to let



## THE MAULANA'S AMANUENSIS

Profiling Humayun Kabir who translated Maulana Azad's opus.  
India Wins Freedom

Professor Humayun Kabir was one of the last intellectuals to venture into the political jungle, and it must be said to his

credit that he did not become one of the clan. Till the last, he maintained his humaneness and nationalism, refusing to toe

the communal line.

It is, therefore, disturbing that he is in the news now, nearly 19 years after his death at the age of 64, not for his numerous literary works, all of very high intellectual calibre, but due to a book for which he was merely an amanuensis.

Born in 1905 in Faridpur, now in Bangladesh, Kabir did his MA degree at the Calcutta University, in the process winning the University gold medal. Other honours were to follow as he went as a state scholar to Oxford for another master's. Here he scored a first in Modern Greats, and in 1931 he won the Exeter College Foundation Prize.

While at Oxford, he was president of the Jowett Society and secretary of the Oxford Union Society. On returning to India, he taught for some time at the Calcutta and Andhra universities.

The fledgling student movement in the country then owed its existence primarily to Kabir. He presided over the All India Muslim Conference held in 1938, and the All India Students Congress in 1944. Later he involved himself in trade union





broken out, only to find that Ahmed had opened another weekly, *Al-Balagh* which was also banned in July 1916. Externed from Bengal—he was earlier prohibited from entering the presidencies of Punjab, Delhi and Bombay—Ahmed went to Ranchi where he was promptly arrested and interned until December 31, 1919.

Soon after his release, he met Mahatma Gandhi on January 16, 1920, a watershed in his life, as it marked his involvement with the Congress party's non-cooperation movement. Within three years, Ahmed had the distinction of becoming the youngest president of the Congress when he assumed that august office in 1923 at the age of 34. And when he was again made president in 1939, he set

another record—that of the longest tenure. He was president of the party until 1946.

The maulana was closely associated in negotiations with Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942 and the British Cabinet Mission in 1946 which went into details of the transfer of power. And it was during this period that his bold stand for an undivided India began to be heard over the cacophony of those who were prepared to divide the subcontinent. So to be sure, it was during those tumultuous days that Maulana Azad did not see eye to eye with Vallabhbhai Patel and also Pandit Nehru, who, he felt, were prepared to accept partition. He was also anguished to find Mahatma Gandhi, who had once proclaimed that the country would be divided only over his dead body, gradually become receptive to Patel's views.

The maulana's unshaken faith in the inviolable integrity of undivided India was best summed up in his statement: "As a Muslim, I, for one, am not prepared for a moment to give up my right to treat the whole of India as my domain and to share in the shaping of its political and economic life. To me it seems a sure sign of cowardice

to give up what is my patrimony and content myself with a mere fragment of it."

With everyone around him in the Congress party reconciled to the inevitability of partition, it was natural for the maulana to feel bitter about the attitudes of his colleagues and their lack of faith in the peaceful co-existence of Hindus and Muslims. He was an isolated personality, even though he was one of the principle participants during the negotiations with the British government earlier.

Independence did not bring any relief to the maulana with the communal frenzy that was unleashed, especially in the north and the east.

It was in consonance with his life-time mission that he set up the Indian Council for Cultural Relations to foster goodwill between India and Pakistan. Perhaps the best epitaph for the maulana would be to recall what he had once said during the freedom struggle: "I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete."

work among port and railway workers, becoming president of the Port Trust workers unions and the Bengal and Railway Employees Association.

His association with the Indian National Congress began in 1931, and terminated in 1966 owing to differences with its leadership. Between 1937 and 1947 he was a member of the Bengal legislature council. In 1945, he acted as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's political secretary at the conference called by Lord Wavell in 1945 and also during the discussions with the Cabinet Mission the following year. It was then that their famous association was cemented. Later, Kabir translated Azad's memoirs, *India Wins Freedom*, into English.

Apart from this piece of translation, Kabir had several literary works to his credit, among them many volumes of poems and other writings in Bengali, including a biography of Immanuel Kant and a study of Marxism. His *Letters on Student Discipline* was a most perceptive analysis of the problem, and *The Indian Heritage* was in line

with his nationalist outlook.

From 1948 to 1956, Kabir was with the Union education ministry, under Maulana Azad, in various posts, before resigning from the ministry to get elected to the Rajya Sabha from West Bengal. The following year he was appointed by Nehru as minister of state for civil aviation before holding the scientific research and cultural affairs portfolio. He also became president of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in 1958. He was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1962, and became a cabinet minister soon after. It was during his tenure that the five IITs were set up. The next year he moved on to the newly-created petroleum and chemicals ministry, where he continued till he broke off with the Congress.

Though recognised as a litterateur and an educationist, Kabir was primarily an Indian who did not hesitate to raise his voice against the fundamentalists of his community. But at the same time he was also very proud of his Muslim lineage; in fact, he once raised a storm by pleading for proportional representation for minorities in edu-

cation and employment.

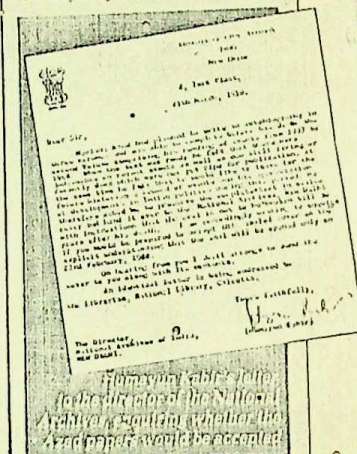
In 1966, Kabir severed his ties with the Congress party, owing to differences with the leadership, and joined Ajay Mukherjee's Bangla Congress and in 1967 was elected to the Lok Sabha. He was also instrumental in bringing the Left parties together to form the United Front government in West Bengal in 1967. Soon, following differences with Mukherjee over the role of the communists, Kabir threw in his lot with the PDF government under Dr P C Ghosh.

After the fall of this ministry he formed the Lok Dal which was routed in the mid-term poll. Following this he merged his fledgling party with the Bharatiya Kranti Dal and became its vice president; a post which he retained till his death in August 1969.

When he was alive, it was said that Kabir's fortunes were hitched to Maulana Azad's star. The same seems true of him posthumously too, considering the furor over publishing the remaining pages of Azad's autobiography.

the sealed envelope be opened and pass into the hands of Orient Longmans. So, on February 20, Nasir Husain obtained an order from New Delhi's district and sessions judge, Santosh Duggal, restraining the National Archives and the National Library from opening the sealed covers containing Maulana Azad's manuscripts.

As the legal battleground was now Calcutta, with Leila's petition being posted for hearing on February 22, she flew down from Delhi that day only to find that the courts

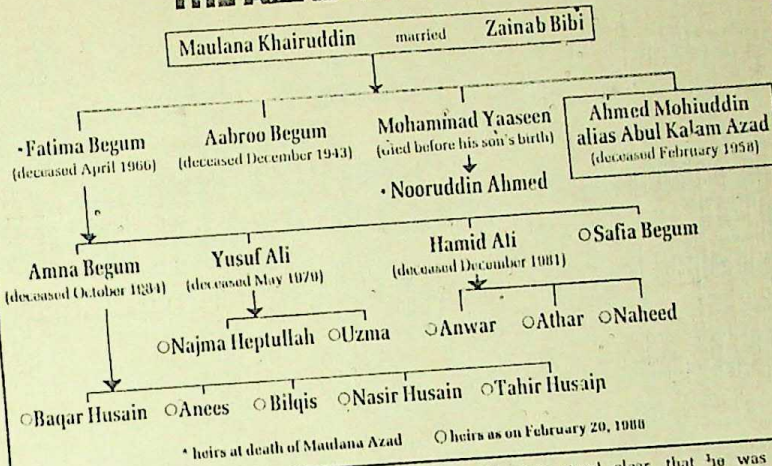


were not functioning in response to the nationwide stir by lawyers. Leila was actually scheduled to reach Calcutta on the night of February 21, but could not get a confirmed booking and was waitlisted for the Delhi-Calcutta evening flight. She could not take that flight, and arrived in Calcutta by the morning flight on February 22. At 12.30 pm she reached the Broad Street residence of her nephew Altamash Kabir, a lawyer and the son of Leila's cousin, Johangir Kabir. When she was told that the court was closed she decided to go to Justice Banerjee's residence at Salt Lake. Banerjee said that he could not hear the matter at his residence. He assured her that had she come to the high court at 10.30 in the morning, he would have heard the matter in his chamber despite the strike. Leila pointed out that the day was her father's birth anniversary as well as the 30th death anniversary of Maulana Azad.

Justice Banerjee gave her a patient hearing, but concluded that the hearing would take place only at 10.30 am the next day (February 23) in the high court. From his residence, notice was served on the director of the National Library, Ashim Dasgupta, to be present in the high court at 10.30 am.



# THE AZAD FAMILY TREE



At the end of the hearing the next day, Justice Banerjee ruled in favour of Leila's plea that "the seals should be broken open immediately" in the presence of National Library director Dasgupta, the heirs of Maulana Azad and Humayun Kabir and eminent scholars and historians. The judge allowed the publishers, Orient Longmans, three days to appeal against his decision, which they did at the time of going to press.

If Leila's earlier legal manoeuvre of obtaining a stay on the transfer of the papers from Calcutta to Delhi did not exactly hurt the Najma Heptullah-Nasir Husain team, her recent victory sets at naught their strenuous efforts to gain possession of the documents as family property. If anything, it upholds Leila's contention that Maulana Azad's papers are national property, and in the public interest even the publisher's financial interests have been given the go by.

Leila challenges the publisher's contention that she has no *locus standi* in the matter—a view shared by Najma Heptullah and Nasir Husain—as her father was a scribe, even though he had signed the contract. "The terms of contract are subject to section 57 of the Copyright Act of 1957 which empowers the author or his successor to prevent distortion, mutilation or modification of work or take action in the event of anything prejudicial to the author's honour or reputation occurring," says Leila. According to her, the contract clearly assigns the 'composer' in Humayun Kabir, the right to terminate the agreement with the publisher on certain conditions, such as if the book has been out of print for more than six

months and is not reprinted and sold within 12 months of the publisher's receiving a notice to this effect.

To be sure, such rights are not as yet available to the maulana's heirs. And, contrary to what is perceived, Orient Longmans do not have exclusive rights on the book, but only a first option. Indeed, envisioning an event wherein the publishers may not be interested in exercising their option, Kabir, in a letter dated April 3, 1958, had averred that "the National Archives, in consultation with the National Library and the ICCR may arrange for the publication of such a complete text".

Predictably, with the matter acquiring the tones of a controversy, many of Maulana Azad's relatives began to dissociate themselves from the aggressive stance adopted by Najma Heptullah and Nasir Hu-

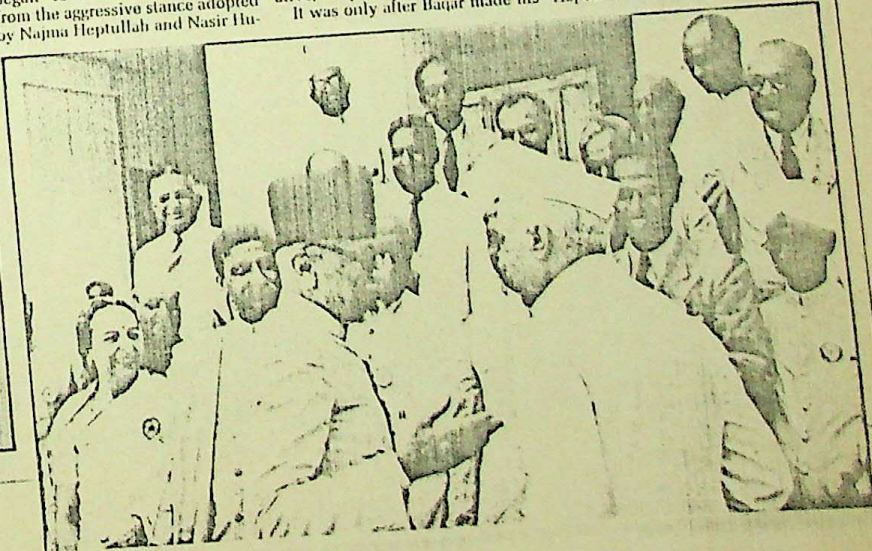
sain. They include Nasir Husain's brother Tahir Husain and his sisters Anees Jalun Begum and Bilqis Khan. Incidentally, Nasir Husain's elder brother Baqar, who is a film distributor, had all along opposed vehemently the attitude of his younger brother and his cousin Najma in seeking to gain possession of the maulana's papers. "The maulana's papers belong to the nation, they are not the sole property of his family to do what it pleases with them. This is more so because the maulana was never close to his relatives when he was alive, and he took great care to distance himself from his family. Hence, I am at a loss to understand why my relatives are suddenly keen to claim papers which would never have been bequeathed to them by the maulana if he were alive," says Baqar Husain.

It was only after Baqar made his

stand clear, that he was acting independently from the joint family stance adopted by Najma Heptullah and Nasir Husain, that his brother and sisters decided to come out in the open and express their solidarity with his views. The dissenting members of the Azad family told the *Weekly* that they would be happy to join hands with Leila in her attempts to see that the papers were released as early as possible. When the *Weekly's* correspondent in Calcutta, S N M Abdi, conveyed this message to Leila, she was gratified that even some of the maulana's kin supported her.

Leila's stand may be further strengthened morally by the fact that most of the maulana's grand-nephews and nieces are abroad and they could hardly be expected to be party to the petition of Najma Heptullah and Nasir Husain which

With a very young mind, him in the company of a very respectable and intelligent person, it was natural for him to be attracted to the latter and the latter to be attracted to the former. This was the beginning of the relationship between the two. The relationship was a very close one and it was a very happy one. The relationship was a very close one and it was a very happy one. The relationship was a very close one and it was a very happy one.





The meeting with Jayati Leila Kabir took place at her cousin's residence in south Calcutta. A student of history at Delhi university, Leila branched off into politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford. On her return to India in 1957, she changed lanes again—she underwent training to become a qualified nurse. Nursing is a profession close to Leila's heart. She is the daughter of the late Humayun Kabir and married to George Fernandes.

Extracts from the interview.

**Why did you jump into the fray?**

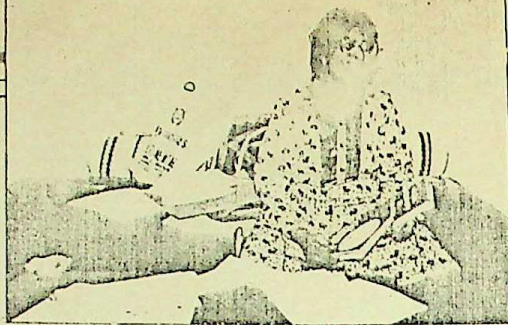
Frankly, it was Maulana Azad's wish that some portions of his book, *India Wins Freedom*, should see the light of day only 30 years after his death. My father, Humayun Kabir, only executed the maulana's wishes by leaving behind two sets of the withheld pages with clear instructions to break the seals on February 22, 1988.

I jumped into the fray when I realised, much to my horror, that no preparations were being made for releasing the withheld portion of the book. I spoke to lawyers and journalist friends for advice. Suddenly we were told that the Union government would hand over the unpublished pages to Orient Longmans on February 22, 1988 at a public function. Instructions were sent from New Delhi to Calcutta's National Library director to send the sealed packet to the capital. That was blasphemous.

My father had left behind two packets; one in New Delhi and the other in Calcutta. These were to be opened simultaneously in the two cities to preclude all chances of tampering. The Union government's

seeks to enforce the family's tenuous rights over the sealed manuscripts.

Interestingly, several other tangential issues have come to the fore in the controversy over the sealed documents. One of them concerns the seal used to close the envelopes containing the papers 30 years ago. According to Baqar Husain, when the maulana expired, Humayun Kabir entered the house holding two sealed packets which contained the papers and began searching for Maulana Azad's personal seal. Nooruddin Ahmed, the maulana's nephew, who was present there, hid the seal and hence Kabir had to use his official seal, that of the minister for education,



## "HEPTULLAH HAS BEEN RETAINED AS A SABOTEUR"

Jayati Leila Kabir tells S N M Abdi

motives behind attempting to fly out the Calcutta packet to New Delhi were suspect. On the other hand, there were some heirs of the maulana who wanted the packets to be handed over to them so that they could decide what to do with them. All that was happening was against the wishes of two great sons of India: Maulana Azad and Humayun Kabir.

Breaking the seal would be only a piece of action. The actual thing is to ensure that the 30-odd pages see the light of day. Significantly, no steps have been taken till today to find out what the actual seal looks like. I am the only one who can identify the real seal. In fact, it is in my possession. There are witnesses who will testify that this very seal was used on the packets lying in Delhi and Calcutta. My primary motive is to ensure that no tampering takes place and that the contents are made available to the public at large and historians so that they can understand the maulana's views on those climactic days.

**But why did you resort to legal action?**

To seal the envelopes.

This version is, however, at variance with the statement made by Maulana Azad's close associate Ansar Harvani, who was at the maulana's bedside when he died. "I was present at the official residence of Maulana Azad when he breathed his last. The only persons in his room were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Ajmal Khan, his life-long personal secretary and the doctor. "I vividly remember that Panditji emerged from the room and announced his death. Nehru then asked Ajmal Khan to immediately lock up Maulana's room and his personal belongings and to hand over the keys to him (Nehru).

"It is true that in the holy traditions of Prophet Mohammad, the Muslim mullis keep a ring with a

As a commoner I had no other option but to go to court. Do you expect me to go to the Delhi durbar and plead that the withheld pages be released for publication? In any case, the government has no *locus standi* in this matter. I went to court to ensure that things take place as per the wishes of the maulana and Kabir. And I have been successful. First, Justice Bhagabati Prasad Banerjee of the Calcutta high court prevented the Calcutta packet from going to Delhi. Second, he ruled on February 24 that the unpublished contents be released to the public at large rather than Orient Longmans alone.

**Your husband, George Fernandes, must be very pleased.**

I did not consult him. This is totally apolitical. There is no question of political gain. Back in 1979, George was the Industries minister in Morarji Desai's government. Charan Singh was the finance minister. I found Charan Singh's budget absolutely anti-people. So I lead a protest by women against the budget, and even organised a rally at the Road Club. To me,

seal to put it on their edicts. Though Maulana was a great mufi in his life-time, he never issued a religious edict. In fact, he did not put his seal on the *fatwa*, asking Muslim soldiers not to fight in the first world war," says Harvani.

Apparently there is much merit in Ansar Harvani's statement, cautious as it is, but from which it can be extrapolated that the maulana would not have let the seal be used to close the envelopes containing the controversial papers. In fact, the *Weekly* has learnt that the envelopes are sealed with Humayun Kabir's personal seal bearing his initials HK—as illustrated by the imprimatur on these pages—and not with Kabir's official seal as Union minister.

Apart from the controversy ab-

the people of the country are more important than the government of the day. Should I have kept quiet in 1979 just because George was in the government?

**Posing as Maulana Azad's natural heir, Najma Heptullah appears determined to take possession of the pages which have not seen the light of day.**

She has been retained as a saboteur. This is evident. It seems to me that in the ultimate analysis it is a descendant of the maulana who is trying to prevent the fulfilment of his wishes. In Islamic culture, or any other culture of the world, the wishes of the dead are regarded as sacrosanct. It is believed that the soul of the departed does not rest in peace until his wishes are honoured in toto.

**I think Orient Longmans will have to enter into a new contract for publishing the full book.**

My lawyers are studying the contract.

**I have already studied it.**

So things must be clear to you. I have served a notice on Orient Longmans in this connection. I hope the matter is sorted out mutually without going to court. But all that will come later. My first priority is to ensure that the withheld pages become the knowledge of the people of India at the earliest.

**There is great speculation about the contents of the unpublished pages. Do you think there is dynamite inside the sealed covers?**

As a student of history myself, I know that what may seem explosive, sensational and volatile today may well appear tame and ordinary after 30 years. The anticipated big bang may turn out to be a mere whimper.

out the seals, there is also a lot of speculation about the contents of the 30 pages—on which also devolves criticism of Humayun Kabir's motives in withholding the pages. Some of the maulana's relatives, such as Baqar Husain have been questioning the veracity of Kabir's averments that it was the maulana who wanted the pages held back. But historical evidence does not lend itself easily to allegations of mischief on the part of Kabir. According to some sources, Nehru went through the book in great detail and agreed with Kabir that in keeping with the maulana's wishes, the pages may be held back.

Nehru's vetting of the manuscript—he is supposed to have made several grammatical





Afsari and Baqar Husain Khan

## THE RIFT WITHIN THE CLAN

Anuradha Dutt profiles the contrary viewpoints of the heirs to Maulana Azad's papers

The court order, issued by district and sessions judge Santosh Duggal on February 20, restraining the National Archives from handing over the manuscript in its custody to Orient Longmans on February 22, as scheduled, was a victory of sorts for the petitioners. And a setback for the advocates of the right of freedom to information. It is indeed a great irony that a leader who believed little in indulging the wishes of his relatives has, posthumously, become a casualty of their vested interests.

The central issue that seems to have been forgotten by the maulana's relatives—the five individuals who are party to the petition restraining the publication of the expurgated portions of his book—is that he never left a will. This was because he felt that his assets, including his works, belonged to the Indian people and not a few individuals who have now claimed a stake in his papers by virtue of being related to him. He was a man whose vision extended far beyond the narrow boundaries of kinship.

The memorandum of agreement signed by the maulana's amanuensis, Humayun Kabir, with Orient Longmans, mentions Fatima Begum, the maulana's sister, now deceased, and Nooruddin Ahmed, the maulana's brother's son, as the heirs of one half of the royalties for the book. The other half was the share of Kabir, who bequeathed it to the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). But their right does not extend to ownership of the book. Yet, Nasir Husain, Najma Heptulla, Naeem Siddiqui, Safia Begum and Rukalya Begum, in designating themselves as the maulana's legal heirs, have tried

to assert proprietorship rights over the work by filing the petition. Among those relatives who have not been party to this move are Nooruddin Ahmed the legal heir to part of the royalties, Baqar Husain Khan, a grand-nephew of the maulana and elder brother of Nasir Husain, Tahif Husain, Anees Jahan Begum and Bilkis Khan.

Nooruddin Ahmed, who lives in Calcutta as a recluse and has no truck with his relatives, was probably inaccessible to them. Baqar Husain on his own admission chose to dissent out of choice, knowing full well that most of his relatives were all ranged on the other side.

A former ICCR official, Baqar Husain is currently director of a film distribution company by the name of Qutub Minar Movies Pvt Ltd. It must have been a difficult decision for him to have diverged from his brother, Nasir's, point of view in this affair, when his business interests are closely aligned with his those of Nasir Husain Films Ltd. But the compulsions of his conscience obviously proved to be stronger.

Baqar Husain and his wife Afsari, share Kabir's daughter Leila's view that the maulana's work is the common heritage of the nation and must be published. Baqar and Afsari also have reservations, however, about whether the maulana himself suppressed the publication of the controversial portions.

Says Baqar Husain, "The maulana made his own career. He was not a protégé of Pandit Nehru or anybody else. He always put forward his own ideas, whether people liked it or not. Do you think he would have been afraid of anyone so as not to express his opinions?"

He adds, "He waited for 10 years after partition for things to cool down, to tell the people about the mistakes that might have been made. Had he lived a few days more, the whole book would have come out." He blames Kabir for expurgating certain portions of the book, those which he thought might have affected his own political interests.

In support of his contention, Baqar says that for three days before his death, the maulana had been in a coma, clearly in no condition to speak to anybody. Shortly after he had expired, Kabir entered the house, holding two packets and began to search for the maulana's personal seal. Nooruddin Ahmed who was present then, quickly hid the seal and Kabir had to make do with his official seal, that of minister for education, to close the manuscripts.

While the culpability of Kabir is debatable, the maulana's disregard of his relatives is a fact. Drawing on her memories, Afsari Khan says, "I have not seen the likes of him, someone who liked to keep his relatives so much in the background. He did not want anyone to take undue advantage of his name and he was very, very particular about this."

Yet, three decades after his demise, this is precisely what his relatives are doing, subverting his catholic viewpoint to assert the narrow interests of kinship. Baqar Husain frankly admits this, while expressing his helplessness to prevent it. While Najma Heptulla and Nasir Husain were able to rope in the other relatives, who are all third in the line of succession, with the exception of Safia Begum, Azad's niece (daughter of his sister, Fatima), they failed to convince Baqar Husain.

The issue of royalties is another rancorous point. While 50 per cent goes to the ICCR thanks to Kabir's munificence, the remaining 50 per cent is supposed to be divided between Nooruddin Ahmed and the descendants of Fatima Begum. Says Baqar Khan, "Just as he (Kabir) bungled the 30 pages, in the same manner he bungled the rights. Had the maulana been living, would he (Kabir) have got 50 per cent of the royalties?"

The question of royalties apart, the 64,000 dollar question is whether the 30 pages, which will complete the book, will be released to an eager public.



Nasir Husain the producer-director of such cinematic extravaganzas as *Jab pyar kisise hota hai*, *Teesri Manzil*, *Caravan* and *Yaadon Ki Baraat*, is more accustomed to hitting the jackpot than the headlines. But he did manage to capture media attention by filing the controversial petition which prompted a stay on the release of the unpublished portions of Maulana Azad's historic work, *India Wins Freedom*. A grand-nephew of the political savant, Husain spoke to the *Weekly* on the eve of the filing of the petition.

**What do you feel about the controversy over the secret pages of Maulana Azad's memoirs?**

What controversy? As far as we are concerned, there is no controversy. We are only asserting our rightful ownership. Whether the pages are published or not is another matter. We are the owners and nobody can touch it.

**If it is such a simple matter, of merely claiming your rightful inheritance, why has the controversy then erupted over the remaining pages of his memoirs?**

The entire matter is being needlessly made into a controversy. The maulana was a

changes—also removes some shine from the charge that the sealed papers are extremely critical of Nehru. While it is well known that the maulana and Nehru differed strongly on several points, it is not very plausible that the unpublished pages should contain passages critical of the country's first prime minister as the published version contains several critical references to Nehru.

The *Weekly* understands on the authority of a constitutional expert in Bombay, in whom Humayun Kabir once confided, that the unpublished pages do not contain any matter critical of Nehru.

If Nehru is not the subject, who is, is the question being asked in political and publishing circles. Two sure targets could be Krishna Menon or Vallabhbhai Patel: there was little love lost between both and the maulana. He detested Patel as he saw in him, increasingly, that faction of the Congress which was convinced that Hindus and Muslims could not be united in one nation. As for Menon, the maulana





Nasir Husain directs Danny : staking his claim

## "I DON'T TRUST HUMAYUN KABIR'S WORD"

Nasir Husain speaks to Anuradha Dutt

very brave person, he was not afraid of anybody. And if he had wanted the papers to be published they would have been published. Now somebody says that the maulana before dying had said that these portions should be published 30 years later. But for three days before his death he had been in a coma, so how could he have said such a thing to Humayun Kabir? It is very doubtful. And, mark you, there's no witness.

And again, what did Nehru say? Nehru himself was a very correct person. He was not afraid of anything. He would never have said, yes, yes, pub-

lish it after 30 years. His words were that whatever the maulana's wish, it should be honoured.

There is also some controversy over the royalties.

That is another matter altogether. Now, how far is Kabir to be trusted? I don't trust him one bit. I knew him personally. I dealt with him for three to four months when I was in Delhi. So I don't trust him about what the maulana said. The maulana was in a coma for three days; he didn't talk to anybody, he didn't meet anybody. So how could he have said that 50 per cent of the royalties should go to

Humayun Kabir? That is Kabir's word. Now his daughter is claiming that too. The interesting part is this: for so many years the book was being sold for Rs 12 or 13, and lakhs of copies were sold. One of my cousins Nabeed, managed to get a share of the royalties, after contesting, no doubt. We were not bothered then. But what are the accounts? Nobody knows. What was the maulana's will? Nobody knows.

Today, my brothers, my sisters, I, myself, the other grandchildren, my aunt in Lucknow, are the successors. Has Orient Longmans, the publishers, consulted us at all about the publication and the accounts? As for what is in the 30 pages, nobody knows at all.

*Humayun Kabir's daughter, Leila, is of the opinion that she, her mother and brother are the heirs of her father, the composer of the book, and so it is they who have the right to the complete book.*

The matter will go to the court and the court will decide it. We have not drawn up any strategy.

*Should the withheld portions be published?*

We are the right people to decide whether those 30 pages should be published or not. Kabir had no right on that. Why did he stop it? Nobody had read it. Not even Panditji. The maulana and the Panditji were very much together.

*According to sources, Najma Heptulla, as a politician, does not want the pages to be published.*

No one would want it. Even I don't want it.

Why?

Because it is our property and we will decide about this.

*Is it not possible that Najma Heptulla fears the withheld portions will prove to be politically damaging?*

All this is mere speculation. Najma started her career when she was only 18 years old. And the maulana has been dead for so many years.

*There is an impression that amongst the maulana's kin, she is the only one who capitalised on the relationship.*

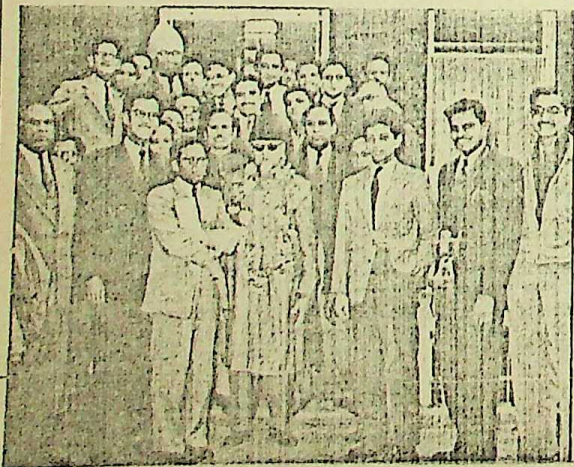
I think she is one of the most hard working persons and what-over she has achieved has been on her own merit. Why should she be afraid of what the maulana has written about Nehru? I don't believe the gossip in the newspapers. I personally feel that she stands on her own two legs. I'm not saying this because she's my cousin.

My brothers and I, all of us are very happy, contented people. Why did we keep quiet all this time? We felt, let 30 years pass, then we'll think about it. We are the owners, nobody can touch it.

*So, are you willing to go to court?*

Of course.

Of all the mythen-achievements, Maulana Azad's best achievement was his endeavour in trying to prevent the division of the subcontinent and maintain the prevailing Hindu-Muslim unity between India and Pakistan.



was irked by his influence on Nehru in shaping the country's foreign policy—a matter on which the maulana clashed with Nehru several times.

That the pages could contain such critical analyses of these two historical personalities becomes a possibility when one takes into account the statement of Ahmad Saeed Malihabadi son of the late Abdur Razaq Malihabadi, one of the trusted associates of the maulana. According to Malihabadi, the late Maulana Ghulam Rasul Meher, who was based in Lahore, was a confidant of Maulana Azad and was one of the few who had read the entire manuscript of the book *India Wins Freedom*. When Malihabadi met Ghulam Rasul in 1960 in Lahore, the latter told him that on comparing the published work with what he had read earlier, he found pages full of critical comments of Krishna Menon and Vallabhbhai Patel missing.

But in a larger context, there is always the question of whether the unpublished pages contain anything sensational pertaining to any personage or merely some bland

passages. Ravindranath Roy, the man who typed out the manuscript, says that the withheld pages were not scandalous to anyone at all but merely dealt with misdoings of a general nature of congressmen and strife within the party.

All such speculation will cease once the papers are removed from under wraps which could be any time in the imminent future. As we go to press, we understand that the case in Calcutta has been posted for March 1 and a ruling may be expected any time thereafter. If it upholds the earlier judgment that the maulana's papers should be immediately released to the public, it will set a precedent and establish the supremacy of public interest over inheritance law.

In any case, it will set at rest possibly the biggest case of literary speculation of the decade. And for those who still believe that the maulana's unpublished work may touch upon Nehru's delicate relationship with Edwina Mountbatten, it would be interesting to note that his book *India Wins Freedom* has been dedicated to Jawaharlal Nehru 'my friend and comrade'. □

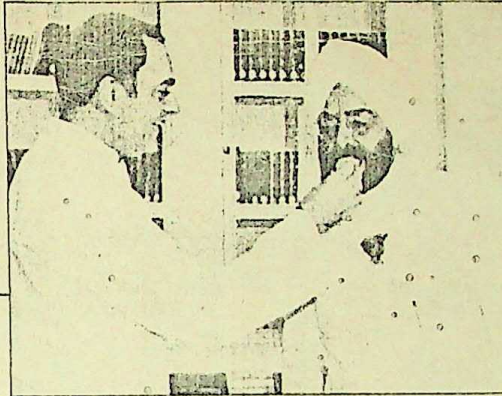


## ZAIL SINGH: THE INSIDE STORY

□ In the interview 'The Untold Story' (Weekly, March 20), Giani Zail Singh plainly told of what had happened during the last days of his tenure as the President of India. Now we know the actual facts.

DIHANANJAY PATSI, *Mumbai*

□ Zail Singh's 'untold story' is worthless stuff. It is impossible to believe that he ever seriously intended having a confrontation with the PM. Then, as now, time hung heavy on his hands and he was simply amusing himself (as he is doing now) playing those games. Reading this pure fantasy, one grudges



one has to live down the legacy of his last incumbent.

B SASISEKHAR, *Madurai*

□ 'For me the nation's interest is always supreme'—thus spake our Giani. But it seems that, for him, the nation meant the ruling Nehru-Gandhi family. The greatest sin that the Giani has committed was the installation of Rajiv as the country's prime minister in the most undemocratic way. With his over-enthusiasm to see another Nehru clan member in the saddle, he threw aside democratic norms and showed his indebtedness to the ruling family.

T S NARI, *Pondicherry*

## PERSONAL FUNDING

□ Since the past week I have been reading in the newspapers statements issued by the respected former President of India, Zail Singh. I have noticed it mentioned in one newspaper that a lot of money was spent on the election of the President, and it also directly referred to the election of the late V V Giri. It stated also that these expenses were met by the Congress.

As his son I had financed the expenses of my late father for his travels to various states in his campaign for the presidential election.

The expenses included rail fare, car hire charges, accommodation at various guesthouses and air fare to ensure being on time for meeting various people from the press.

All this cost me a lot of money. No one has ever come forward to pay me. If someone does say that they have paid, why not pay me my dues

also, as I am a salaried person who can ill afford to squander taxed money. Time and again I have stated that when my father wanted to stand for elections as President, it was only his wife Saraswati Bai Giri who insisted that he must stand.

No party ever came forward to help him at that time. It was only after that they came to support him.

when he made a statement to the press. I have certain documents to prove what I am saying, but unlike others I do not want to make it a public issue since I would like to ensure that whatever has been done has been done, and no further action need be taken in this matter.

Can I ask the respected leaders of various parties and the press to once and for all stop these slanderous statements? I would like to ask everyone to just leave out my father's name and not bring him into the controversy.

Y B GIRI, *Ghaziabad*

the money and time one has spent on this issue of your magazine.

A P SINGHA, *Patna*

□ You seem to have got the Giani's photograph on the front cover the wrong side up (as is evident from the pattern of the pleats on his turban).

NAVJIT SINGH, *Bombay*

□ It is really sad that after stepping down, Giani has chosen to malign the prestige of the highest seat by uncovering, even if true, the unsavoury fact that money was channelled during the presidential election of V V Giri.

B P PANT, *New Delhi*

□ Giani Zail Singh has a penchant for getting himself embroiled in controversies with his impetuous utterances. Now, even after laying down office, he obviously wants to stay in the limelight and cannot reconcile himself to a life of peaceful retirement.

It is well known that some former Presidents had fiercely disagreed with their prime minister on political and constitutional issues. But none of them chose to wash their linen in the columns of newspapers and journals.

These days the Giani is at his garrulous best in the company of journalists. When some of his utterances come home to roost, he is ready with his disclaimer.

The Giani lent his ears to those who had dangerous political designs. During his tenancy Rashtrapati Bhavan dwindled into a meeting-place for bribe givers and bribe takers. The nation was sadly let down when the Giani chose not to throw out these men from the sacred precincts of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

In the days of the Giani's illustrious predecessors such intrigues would not have been allowed. Now, the president

## A TAXING SITUATION

□ The bureaucrats, says Palkhivala in his article in the Weekly dated February 21, have acted on the conclusive presumption that there is no intellectual life outside North Block. I would go one step further and say that the mandarins of the Central Board of Direct Taxes have been pressurised not only to accept procedures thrust upon them but also not to bring in amendments which would touch vested interests. I shall rest content by quoting only two instances in support of my stand.

First, recall what happened recently when the powers of the chairman of the board were curtailed so that he could no longer issue orders regarding postings and transfers of senior field officers like commissioners and assistant commissioners of income-tax by himself, without obtaining prior clearance from 'higher' authorities. If not posting officers of proven ability and unquestioned integrity in sensitive posts, it has been ensured that the big fish among tax dodgers are not touched. In other words, a Bhure Lal cannot be allowed to operate in sensitive posts in the income-tax department!

Second, the Amendment Act does not abolish the glaring distinction between the procedure adopted for valuation of perquisites by way of accommodation provided at concessionary rate by the government or the Reserve Bank of India to its employees and the procedure adopted in the case of company executives to whom a different set of rules applies.

This can best be illustrated by taking the example of a senior officer of the status of secretary stationed in Bombay and a company executive of equivalent status, both getting a salary of Rs 9000 per month. Under rule 3 (b) of IT Rules the value of accommodation provided at concessional rates to the former by the government is nil because the rent actually paid will never be less than the rental value to be computed under rule 3(a), but in the case of the company executive the position will be:

Rental value of his accommodation per annum @ Rs 6000 per month:	Rs 96,000
Less 20 per cent of his salary of Rs 9000 per month:	Rs 21,600
Difference being the value of perquisite by way of accommodation provided at concessional rent:	Rs 74,400

So, assuming that other things are equal, a company executive has to pay additional tax at 50 per cent of the Rs 74,400 or Rs 37,200 where his counterpart in the central government pays nil tax on such perquisites since the value of his perquisites is nil. This is because in his case the value of perquisites is decided by application of archaic laws under FR/SK. A suggestion to abolish this invidious distinction was never taken up by the board. Now you can guess why!

PADUKA, *Bangalore*

□ From the disclosures made by the former President Giani Zail Singh, it seems to me that the greatest disservice that Mrs Gandhi did to the country was not so much the imposition of Giani Zail Singh on the country as President of the republic.

D P LAIBRI, *Bhopal*

□ Is the Giani so starved for publicity and attention that he has to resort to such gimmicks to be in the news? Even if whatever he says is true, why didn't he make the statements earlier, as the guardian of our Constitution? To spill or not to spill the beans seems to be the Giani's dilemma. I only hope that this game of cat-and-mouse will not prove to be his undoing and suggest that such people (be they former Presidents or peasant leaders like Tikait) should not be given so much of publicity by the media.

SUNITA MAHAPATRA, *Thane*

□ One thing that you have mentioned is doubtless true—that Giani is a master strategist.

Giani's bitterness towards Rajiv is quite conspicuous. He firmly believes Rajiv's continuance as PM will jeopardise India's programmes and democratic structure. He endeavoured to find an alternative to Rajiv when he was the President, but chose to do so after retiring from the highest office of the land in order to maintain his own image and to avoid setting a bad precedent.

So far he has not named a single Opposition leader and has been careful enough to maintain a stony silence about the parties of the Left. These moves go to show his truly remarkable foresight.

S RIZWAN MOHIDEEN, *Hyderabad*









Vijayalakshmi Pandit at the wedding of her daughter Navantara (extreme right) in January 1949. Behind her is the groom Gautam Sehgal and in front is the groom's father. To her right are Indira Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and her daughter Chandrasekha



FIRST PERSON

VIJAYALAKSHMI PANDIT

# WE NEHRUS

There is a lovely house along Rajpur Road in Dehra Dun. It is well-maintained, has a lovely garden, and is replete with photographs, nostalgia and memories. It is the house of a still handsome woman, now in her late eighties and recovering from a recent stroke.

She is Vijayalakshmi Pandit, sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, aunt of Indira Gandhi and grand-aunt of the present Indian prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi. Undoubtedly India's envoy extraordinaire with postings at Stalin's Moscow, the Court of St James and the United Nations, Mrs Pandit today lives in seclusion with her daughters Nayantara and Chandralekha. A third daughter, Rita, lives in Delhi.

Born into the legendary Nehru family and drawn into the vortex of the freedom movement, Pandit had the rare opportunity of being close to centrestage during the tumultuous pre-independence years. Later, she opted to become a citizen of the world—only to discover that she had been effectively locked out of the arena of politics. Keen to come back and establish her own political base, Pandit found her aspirations thwarted when the vice-presidency—a post which she had expected—was denied her.

Later, even though she was elected to Parliament, Indira Gandhi's machinations stemming from insecurity and mistrust of her aunt led to her resigning and opting to seek political exile. She made a brief return—only to spearhead a memorable campaign against the policies of the Congress under the Emergency unleashed by Mrs Gandhi.

On these pages, Vijayalakshmi Pandit speaks to Sailesh Kottary about her life and times. Of the scheming that effectively kept her out of politics. Of her uneasy relationship with her niece, Indira Gandhi. Of her affection for Rajiv Gandhi. And of the general decline in the quality of public life which she has witnessed for over eight decades.

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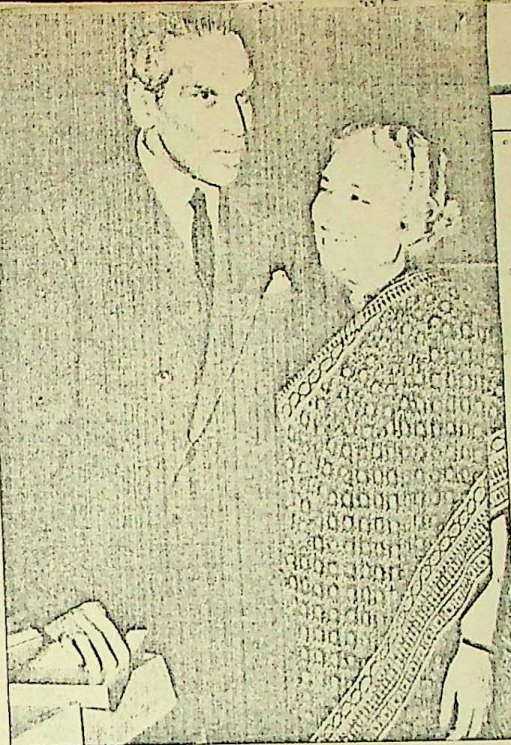




Krishna Menon was a very brilliant man and he wanted to be very close to Nehru. He was close to Nehru intellectually; their background, their education was very similar. He was certainly closer to Nehru than many of the other ministers in Nehru's cabinet such as Rajaji, Balraj Pant, Asafulla Khan, Azad. These were all brilliant people but with a different background.

Krishna and my brother had leftist sympathies and came together on many issues. I think at first he liked me very much, but he was also jealous of me. He didn't like my close relationship with my brother. In history it has happened but once or twice for a brother and sister to be so close even though there was such a big age difference. *Bahut pyar tha* and, many times, even without my telling him, he would come. I was in difficulty and he would immediately try to help me out. Krishna didn't like that. When I was in the UN and when I was ambassador he often tried to get things done over my head and reach my brother, which I didn't appreciate. It put Panditi in a tight spot, especially his habit of acting officially even before the government had arrived at a policy.

One such instance was when the USSR invaded Hungary in 1956, which was a critical time for East-West relationships. I was the high commissioner to UK and was on vacation in India and Bhai sent a



## THE MENON FACTOR

Vijayalakshmi Pandit on how the mercurial Krishna Menon was zealous of his friendship with Jawaharlal Nehru and strived to remain his closest confidante

special plane to bring me to Delhi. A cabinet conference was held and it was decided that the Government of India would not issue any statement on this sensitive matter until more facts

were gathered. I was asked by Bhai to go directly to London and monitor events from there.

I did not even go home to collect my luggage but caught the next flight to London. And

on arrival at Heathrow, there were instructions that I should see the British prime minister immediately. I did not go to the Chancery but drove straight instead to No. 10 Downing Street. The British prime minister was agitated because even though New Delhi had assured him that we would refrain from making any statement in the matter until we had more facts, Krishna Menon had apparently made an impassioned speech in the UN supporting the Russians. You can imagine my predicament when the British prime minister wanted my explanation in the affair.

I have a letter from Bhai in which he says: 'I know Krishna Menon is in some ways like a teenager, he sulks and he gets very angry if you don't accept what he's saying. And Menon wouldn't wish my love for you to prejudice my judgement. And of course I wouldn't.'

There was this overwhelming desire on the part of Krishna to succeed and to be the only close confidant of the prime minister. So he schemed and drove many people out just because they were in a position to influence Bhai. In my case, he spiked my candidacy for the vice presidency in the early 1960s, and it was not the only time when he manoeuvred to keep me out of the Indian political firmament. He advised Jawaharlal Nehru that if I were nominated as vice-president under Dr Radhakrishnan, it would be setting an unhealthy precedent...

I was born in Allahabad when the century began and I grew up in the heat and dust there. That is why I have this great love for the mountains. I think I have spent almost every summer of my life in the midst of mountains, whether in Europe or the Soviet Union or in Kashmir. And I guess that is why I have retired in the sunset of my life to the foothills of the Himalayas. In Dehra Dun, a place which holds many fond memories for me and which I think is one of the few places we could go back to, after having migrated generations ago from Kashmir, having settled down in Allahabad, then having moved on to Delhi. And from there on, everywhere.

Our house in Allahabad was the legendary Anand Bhavan, which has now been bequeathed to the nation.

I remember there were at least 40 members of the household living

in this rambling mansion when I was growing up. It was a fascinating joint family, one in which you could never get bored. We always had uncles and cousins and nephews and it was a very "charged" atmosphere. It was also very supportive.

Thanks to my father, Motilal Nehru, we had a lavish lifestyle. There were over 50 servants to look after us and we had our own horses and syces who used to go ahead of us when we went to the hill stations in summer. Interestingly, we had a virtual dichotomy in the household with one half of it, my father's part, being totally Western and my mother's half of the house, totally Indian.

We even used to have two types of cuisine—Western for my father and his many English friends, and Indian for my mother and her relations. That was because my mother Swarup Rani was very traditional and a devout Hindu, but

we, the children, used to be at ease in both parts of the household. What is little known is that my name too was Swarup, until it was changed to Vijayalakshmi on my marriage, according to the custom in those days.

I did not go to any conventional school because in those days girls were never really expected to go to school. It was a totally different society then, from what you are used to now. There were no good schools for girls, so I had to avail myself of a governess. An English governess to be precise. And now you will ask me why my father had to opt for an English governess and whether it was not a touch of snobbery. But the truth is that we just couldn't get Indian governesses—which stemmed from the fact that there were no good English schools for girls. Besides, no Indian woman liked to work as a governess. So I had this governess who stayed with me for 15 years

until I was married. Her name was Hooper.

You never would believe, but even much after my time, when I was looking for an Indian governess for my children, I could not find a single suitable candidate. I had a series of governesses for them, of almost every European nationality, and the one who stayed longest was a Danish lady who was a health expert. Her name was Anna Orusholdt but the children called her 'Tantana', as they couldn't pronounce her name. Ms Hooper taught me everything in my early years. Reading, writing, arithmetic, and later I had professors from Allahabad University who used to tutor me.

Life during my teens, in the mid-1910s, was very slow-moving. It was a regular process. Almost like a river which moves, yet in which motion cannot be observed. Every



day was the same, we rarely had any changes. People largely led a sequestered life and no one moved out of their houses.

We went to a cinema once in a month, or less, and the occasional outings were when we went to the theatre to see the Shakespearean troupes which came down from England once in a while. At such times, there would first be discussions as to whether a girl could go there, and only if the consensus was in our favour were we allowed out for an evening at the theatre.

We had a few Kashmiri friends, such as Tej Bahadur Sapru's family, and the odd English friend because my father was a great friend of English lawyers and judges. But by and large, life depended on the people with you, and a girl was not encouraged to look far or freely.

The major event in my life was my marriage, when I was barely 20, to Ranjit Pandit, who was a barrister and a Saraswat. As we were Kashmiri Saraswats and Ranjit was a Maharashtrian Saraswat, there was a big hue and cry about the marriage and half my community did not turn up at the event. All this despite the fact that both my parents were for it, as was Mahatma Gandhi. When I look back on it now, I laugh; because when one of my granddaughters married a Muslim some time ago, nobody even raised an eyebrow.

Ranjit Sitaram Pandit was a man of many talents. A barrister, he was a true scholar who spoke 11 European and Indian languages. Among the languages he had mastered was Sanskrit. He had translated Sanskrit classics into English and one such work was Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, the history of Kashmir. Ranjit was also an outstanding musician with a good voice, and he played the violin. He was also a great sportsman and had a love of the outdoors. He studied at Heidelberg and other major universities in Europe such as Oxford and the Sorbonne before coming over to India to practise law.

I first met Ranjit in Bombay, years before my marriage when he was a practising barrister in Calcutta. He then came over to Allahabad and was devilling for my father, which was when our courtship began. I think he always wanted to marry a Kashmiri because of his great involvement with the land of his origin.

My wedding was a very memorable affair, in the sense that I was not given any dowry or allowed to wear any jewellery. I wore khadi when I got married, which was due to the Gandhian influence on my father. The ceremony was held at Anand Bhavan and the cream of Indian politicians attended the

wedding. Actually, I was wearing khadi because Gandhi had asked my father what I would be wearing and he casually replied, "What else but khadi!"

I was mortified at the prospect of wearing khadi because in those days there was no artifice by which the coarse fabric could be beautified, such as the different prints or

night and Gandhi had excused himself from being present as he had to retire to bed early, as was his custom. However, as Ranjit and I were going for the ceremony, Gandhi woke up and asked to see Ranjit and me.

What followed was a very long lecture by Gandhi about self-sacrifice, and the need for self-

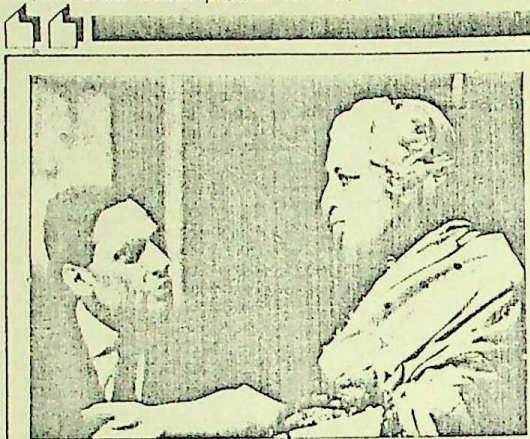
long ago, when I was only 15. That was when I first heard Gandhi speak in Allahabad. It was his first visit there and he was soliciting funds. I remember pulling off one of the gold bangles which I had worn, and donating it. Such was the power of the simple oratory of Gandhi, which bordered on sheer magic. Later, I had a difficult time trying to explain to my mother about the decision on my part to gift away the gold bangle. I was debating within myself whether I should give away the other one too, but the boy who came around with the bag, seeing the indecision on my face, told me to keep it, since there would be other occasions to donate it. How right he was!

Gandhi had come into our family life earlier, through my brother Jawaharlal, whom I called Bhai. Bhai had returned from England full of education but in search of a cause, and he found that in Gandhi. He had been associated in England with the Left movement and he was active in holding anti-imperialist rallies and had a circle of friends who were similarly inclined. You know how it was in England in those days, it was fashionable to be a Fabian socialist and his years at Oxford left a deep impress on Bhai.

On his return he tried to practise law but gave it up as he was not particularly motivated. So Gandhi's comment was like a light flooding into his life. He dedicated himself to everything that Gandhi stood for, something which my father never quite did. I mean, Bhai accepted non-violence, he accepted the *charkha*, he accepted *satyagraha*, everything.

Because the idea of freedom for India was the main cause. And believe me, it was not too difficult because there was only one vision. Today, there are so many different perspectives to look at, hence the confusion in our political life. Of course, this is not to mean that those who were not with Gandhi wanted the British rule to continue. Actually, most of them may not have had the courage or the privileged means to speak out their convictions, as did Bhai in those early days.

It was in 1920, in the wake of the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, and the whole of India was up in arms over the barbarity. Gandhi was one of the people who were focusing public opinion on the tragedy. Bhai was one of those who went to Jallianwalla Bagh and later my father headed a committee on the massacre. Gandhi then formed the Satyagraha Sabha for those who were prepared to do satyagraha against British rule and Bhai was among the first volunteers to join it.



Certainly, my appearances at the United Nations and my tenure as high commissioner in London were memorable. Among my better speeches before the international body was the one I made on the South Africa issue—which was quite dramatic, actually—and which certainly helped in bringing about the two-thirds majority vote against General Smut's regime.

patterns on it which are now available. And just as I was getting worked up, Kasturba Gandhi sent me a beautiful piece of khadi which she herself had woven and embroidered and I got married in it.

Ranjit, however, was wearing a silk *achkan*, as his people were not Gandhians. I mean that they were neither for Gandhi nor against Gandhi. They were actually not too politically conscious and they had very many close friends from among the Kathiawar princes whom they moved with. This is because Ranjit's father Sitaram, who had studied law in London, and his wife, emigrated from their home-town in Ratnagiri to Kathiawar where they settled down.

There is a little-known instance about our wedding which I find very funny even to this day. According to the Kashmiri custom, our marriage was conducted at

denial, I was getting very worried seeing the look of rapt attention on Ranjit's face. It was obvious that he was under Gandhi's spell. Fearful that Gandhi would finally end up by asking Ranjit to take a vow of celibacy, I just about managed to blurt out, almost like a plea, that I wanted to have a normal married life with Ranjit. Gandhi looked at me and smiled and said, "If that is your wish, I will not stand in the way."

Life with Ranjit was always as high as it was an education and an experience. Ranjit was very supportive of me. We set up house in Calcutta where Ranjit had a good practice. I had three children, Rita, Nayan-tara, and Chandraksha, and soon I was busy with household chores. But over us all loomed the freedom struggle and soon our lives were transformed irrevocably.

Actually, my life had changed



That was how Gandhi came to Anand Bhavan on his visit to Allahabad in his bid to canvass opinion, raise funds and also publicise and protect the Satyagraha Sabha. He met my father who offered him funds, but Gandhi replied in the words reminiscent of Jesus Christ: "I want you, not your money. I don't want your money because I can always get money. But people such as you are rare and my need for them is greater."

My father was a very successful lawyer and as he was not fully convinced of Gandhi's principle of non-violence, he could not accede to Gandhi's wish to give up his practice and join the freedom struggle. My father could not understand how freedom could be achieved by fasting or by offering satyagraha against the might of the British empire. All these were terms that were not recognisable or understandable in those days. But Bhai saw in them the seeds of India's larger destiny. And later, he would be joined by my father who too fell under the Gandhian spell.

When Bhai joined Gandhi, it was memorable. Earlier too he had been going to the villages, meeting people there and addressing meetings. But when he joined Gandhi he gave up his entire wardrobe of fine clothes and started wearing khadi, and also gave up eating meals at night. Instead, he used to have only milk and bread. I still remember it so vividly, all of us sitting on the dining-table eating dish after dish of silver plates, while Bhai would sit with his stainless steel *thali* and eat his spartan fare.

**M**uch later, my father too joined Gandhi. And that was a magnificent occasion. Anand Bhavan was virtually handed over to the Congress party and it was renamed Swaraj Bhavan. We moved to a much smaller house which became the second Anand Bhavan. It was a great decision on the part of my father to give up his lucrative practice which, in effect, meant giving up an entire lifestyle based on comfort.

Gone were the evenings in our house where people would gather like a salon and then wine and dine late into the night. Gone were the numerous dishes that used to be cooked in the gigantic kitchen—in their place was just simple fare. Gone too was the silverware. Naturally, some of the servants were not required and they left us. We also gave up our horses and so the syces too were not required. Overnight, our entire existence changed. Even the servants who were with us changed their livery for khadi. Can you imagine what such a radical



## THE INDIRA I KNEW

She was insecure, she did not trust anyone and her strength lay in her silence. But she was a brilliant politician, says her aunt

**A**s a person Indu was insecure. But I sometimes hear people talking about her and I have a completely different picture—a relaxed person, a person of great depth, but I never saw that part of her. I only saw her weaknesses and her insecurity. You see, she was born into a family that was breaking up. I

was born in a family which was growing, money-wise, prestige-wise. I was a loved child and she was a much loved child too, but the family was breaking up. Father and mother constantly in jail. And it is natural that she felt insecure.

She had a feeling that her mother had not been treated

properly by the Nehrus. I cannot say how justifiable this is but all I can say is that her mother was unhappy until Gandhi came along. And then she threw herself into the movement and did a great job, sick as she was.

I don't think that Indu was ever close to her mother, whatever she may have said later.

change must have meant for my father, a wealthy man who had over 50 servants at his beck and call? But my father never looked back. And therein lay his greatness.

Though my father was initially not quite drawn to Gandhi, when he joined the freedom movement he did it with the ferocity of a lion. I mean literally, because he looked like a lion with his head of white hair and he had a lion-hearted manner of doing things. Despite his commitment to the freedom struggle, it was not my father's fortune to see a free India. He died in 1931.

I was first imprisoned in the following year after my sister Krishna (who married Raja Hutheesing) and I disregarded notices preventing us from taking part in political rallies. We were taken to the district jail in Allahabad, where we had the experience of being housed in crowded cells with women prisoners. The cells were called barracks and there were about 20 women in each barrack. Every woman had a bed, a little iron table by the side for her to put her things on. The worst bit was the latrine which was in the

same area, just two steps above. So the stink was awful. And my cousin Uma Nehru was there, and she being older than us, took charge. She made a rule that we all had to change our beds every alternate day so that everyone had an equal chance to be close to the stinking toilet!

I was in prison two more times, once in 1940 for six months and the third time was in 1942 during the Quit India movement. During the last time, there were no first or second class prison facilities. We were all treated alike, newspapers were stopped, we were not allowed to write letters. It was the time when my mother was beaten up by the police and we heard from the grapevine that Bhai, who was imprisoned in Ahmedabad, had given up his privileges in protest at the outrage.

**T**he first public office I held was as minister for health and education in the United Provinces in 1936. I was in the cabinet of Govind Ballabh Pant and the ministry was formed as the sequel to the Government of India Act 1935, which granted provincial autonomy and

the holding of elections. Both Ranjit and I were nominated for the elections, Ranjit from a district near Allahabad and I from a district near Kanpur. Both of us won the elections. One thing which I particularly remember was the immense distances that the villagers had to tread to cast their votes to get us elected. Their determination and faith in us were indeed very touching. It made you deeply aware of your responsibility to them as their elected representative.

Interestingly, Pantji was very particular about little things such as the way I dressed, the way I spoke to men, which was to be expected since he was very orthodox by nature. And Bhai had made it clear to me that I should not do anything to upset Pantji as he had a difficult task looking after UP.

There was a very interesting incident which took place when I was in office. I once received a petition signed by women who said they were being turned out of their houses and not given any shelter, for no apparent reason. I thought that I would speak to the chairman of the municipal board of Lucknow, who happened to be



And I don't even think she was close to her father. Closeness was never a word that she could have understood. That is my assessment of her, but I know from some other people a different story which makes me sad. I now genuinely feel that there could have been something in my approach which must have put her off or prevented her from coming too close.

She always put blocks in my way when she was prime minister and I was a parliamentarian. There are little things which are symbolic in the House: such as not catching the prime minister's eye or not being assigned any role in any parliamentary committee. While hundreds of people much less competent than I were sent abroad on one study trip or another, or sometimes even on jawats, I was never picked out. I felt hurt at the neglect.

But she was a brilliant politician, and sometimes ruthless. More than her inner strength, which never surprised me, it was her manipulative nature, her harshness and her ruthlessness which was unexpected. None of us Nehrus were like that. We always separated politics from personal relationships, but it was not so with Indu. If you were not with her, you were against her.

With Indu, I always maintained that her silence was her strength. *Bolti nahin thi*. You had to draw your own conclusions. And I heard one or two petty things which reflected her wary attitude towards me. After I had come back as high commissioner in the UK and had been in Parliament for a while, I heard that the British government was keen that I should go to the court of St James again, as they were very happy with what I had done to cement the Anglo-Indian relationship. Indira not only did not let me in on this, but instead offered me the ambassadorship in France! And when I turned down the offer and asked her if it was true that she had refused to send me to London, she kept quiet for a while and then said, "Yes, it's true. But Pappi, I don't trust you politically."

That was the first time she had told me the truth about what she thought about me and I was rather pleased, because that was what I had always suspected.

The campaign against the Congress just after the Emergency came much later. There was nothing personal or anti-Indira about it. My campaign was based solely on principles as I felt that the Emergency was not what I, and millions of other

Indians who had participated in the freedom struggle, had fought for. I think she told some people that while I may not have been the main reason for her losing her seat.

I was not happy when Indu lost, believe me. I was at the Imperial Hotel in Delhi when the results of the election began coming in. And I began crying when I heard that Indira was trailing. I cried bitterly when she lost. I mean, even though I had campaigned against her policies, I did not want her not to be there. I wanted her not to have the power, she wielded. I am sure you understand the distinction.

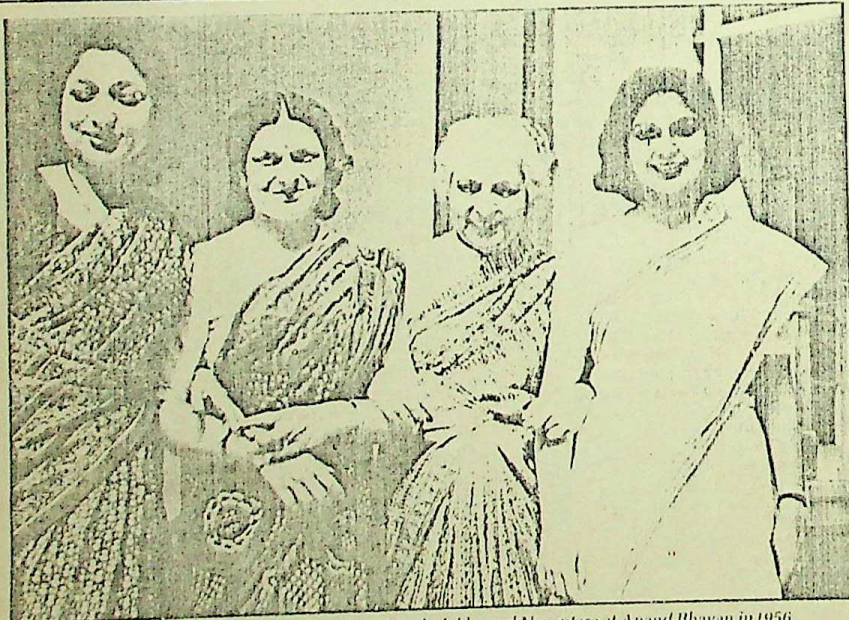
Then I went to see her a few days later. She received me very politely at Willingdon Crescent and I was with her for half an hour or so. There wasn't really much one could say to her at that time. I mean after all, I had spearheaded the campaign against her and my speeches had been published in the papers. So I couldn't go and say I am sorry. But we spoke of other matters, largely personal. From then on we hardly met in a close way. We just met casually. I don't remember particularly meeting her when she came to power for the second time in her political career.

Khaliq Uzaman, whom I regarded as an elder brother. Khaliq read the letter and his face went white. But I was a fool and I did not understand anything about life even though I was 36 years old then.

Khaliq said he could not do anything but did not explain. Other people too reacted in the same manner. I was curious and I decided to inspect the area much to everybody's consternation. It turned out to be the red light district!

When I inspected the area, I met the women and it was a strange experience. Maybe it was sordid, but it showed me how grim life could be. I saw the *kothas* and in one of them I met a woman who was very ill. I kept asking, "Kya binari hai?" But no one answered. Finally, I lost my temper and said to my secretary, A G Kher, "Batao na." And he said, "Aap iski madad nahin kar sakti." It turned out she had venereal disease and I realised later that there was no hospital in Lucknow which could treat women for this dreaded disease. One of the good things I did subsequently was to start such a ward at King George's Hospital.

There was another instance which I remember. The Hardwar Kumbh was held during my tenure and Purushottam Das Tandon, our speaker, wanted to come there without being inoculated. Even though I refused, Pantji relented. Cholera soon broke out as millions of people from all parts of India kept pouring in and we soon had



Vijayalakshmi Pandit with her daughters Rita, Chandralokha and Nayantara at Anand Bhavan in 1956

I remember there were at least 40 members of the household living in our rambling mansion, the legendary Anand Bhavan, when I was growing up. It was a fascinating joint family, one in which you could never get bored. It was a very 'charged' atmosphere. It was also very supportive.



chill and Mountbatten used to tell it later to their friends.

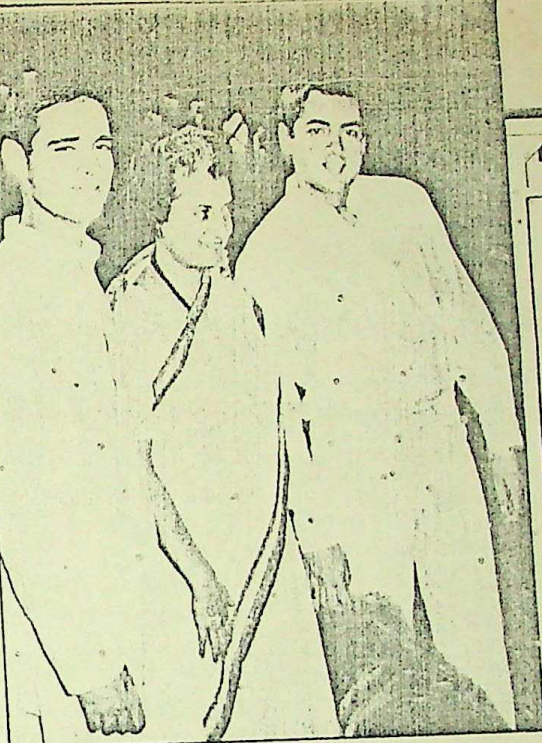
Speaking of Mountbatten, or Dick as I used to call him, he never had any humour about himself. Every time I visited England I would go over to Broadlands, his ancestral home. It was a beautiful, rambling house with acres of gardens, lovely paintings, a special cinema hall and gold cutlery. And every time we met, even if we were alone, Dick would be exceedingly formal. I once asked him, "Dick, is it necessary for us to be so formal with each other and eat off gold plates when we are alone?" And he said, perfectly straight-faced, "I don't see why not," and went on eating.

Tired of being abroad for almost a decade-and-a-half, I returned to India to try to establish a political base. Because by then I had realised that I had been cut off from the mainstream of Indian politics. Some people think that it was intentionally orchestrated, perhaps I was good as a diplomat. But I felt, especially later, that certain vested interests could have been involved. And I began to feel quite low when, on my return, I did not really know what to do. I was feeling bad because I had opted for a diplomatic career much against the wishes of several people whom I loved and cared for. Among them was Feroze Gandhi who was particularly insistent and kept saying, "Puppi, tum math jana."

Krishna Menon was always jealous of his relationship with Bhai. And so it was inevitable that he tried to down me in his game of one-upmanship. On several occasions when I was a diplomat he had tried to get things past me by dealing behind my back with the prime minister. There were several occasions when he laid down his own foreign policy for the Indian government to follow. Bhai was aware of all this but he had a soft spot for Krishna. I guess it was understandable since their background and education was similar.

But despite their friendship, Bhai was all too aware of his manoeuvrings. I have a letter from Bhai in which he says in effect, "I know Krishna Menon is in some ways like a teenager, he sulks and he gets very angry if you don't accept what he's saying. And Menon wouldn't wish my love for you to prejudice my judgement. And of course I wouldn't."

There was this overwhelming desire on the part of Krishna to succeed and to be the only close confidant of the prime minister. So he schemed and drove many people out just because they were in a position to influence Bhai. In my case, he spiked my candidacy for the vice-presidency in the early



1960s, and it was not the only time when he manoeuvred to keep me out of the Indian political firmament. He advised Jawaharlal Nehru that if I were nominated as vice-president under Dr Radhakrishnan, it would be setting an unhealthy precedent...

I was quite hurt at the turn of events, so when my brother offered me another job I told him rather curtly that I did not want any job. I told him that I was willing to work here in India as I had done before, and he said, "I don't want you to bargain with me. Bhai was like my idol, so after a while I thought I had made a mistake. Hence, when I was offered governorship of Maharashtra, I accepted it."

There was there in Maharashtra until Bhai died, when I began receiving letters from scores of people asking me to stand from his constituency in Phulpur. I went to Lal Bahadur Shastri who suggested that Indira could stand in her father's constituency. But I had already sounded her with the same suggestion and she had told me that she was not prepared to face an election just yet. So Shastriji asked Uma Shankar Dixit for his opinion and that is how I was given the ticket to become a parliamentarian.

But I resigned from Parliament as I was not too happy. I realised that my niece Indu was very suspicious and did not trust me. She always put blocks in my way when she was prime minister and I was a parliamentarian. There are little

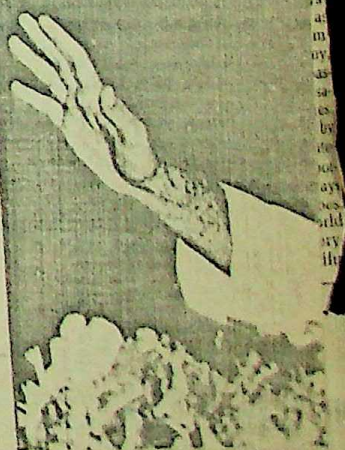
things which are symbolic in the House, such as not catching the prime minister's eye or not being assigned any role in any parliamentary committee. While hundreds of people much less competent than me were sent abroad on one study trip or another, or sometimes even on jaunts, I was never picked out. I felt hurt at the neglect...

And I heard one or two petty things which reflected her wary attitude towards me. After I had come back as high commissioner in the UK and had been in Parlia-

I resigned from Parliament as I was not too happy. I realised that my niece Indu was very suspicious and did not trust me. She always put blocks in my way when she was prime minister and I was a parliamentarian. I guess Indu distrusted me from the moment she assumed office.

ment for a while, I heard that the British government was keen that I should go to the court of St James again, as they were very happy with what I had done to cement the Anglo-Indian relationship. Indira not only did not let me in on this, but instead offered me the ambassadorship in France! And when I turned down the offer—I couldn't even speak French—and asked her if it was true that she had refused to send me to London, she kept quiet for a while and then said, "Yes, it's true. But Puppi, I don't trust you politically." So what else

There has been a decline in the standards of leadership all around. Look at the people who were with Gandhi. And whom do we now have comparable with that stature? In Gandhiji's day you had to give up a lot to gain his favour. The situation is exactly the opposite today.





I couldn't bear the Emergency, especially as I had seen trucks come out to Dehra Dun and pick people up for sterilisation just because they could not prove that they had only two children. Some of my servants too were picked up. Such was Sanjay Gandhi's Emergency.



believe me... I cried bitterly... though I had campaigned against her policies, I did not want her not to be there. I wanted her not to have the power she wielded. I am sure you understand the distinction. I called on her after her defeat and it was a difficult experience for both of us... I don't remember meeting her after she returned to office the second time. Because by then our families had drifted apart.

I have a lot of affection for Rajiv. He is my eldest grandson, you know. He is a very accommodating and loving young man and I am sure he reciprocates my affection. As a matter of fact, I had lunch with him yesterday and it was such a nice meeting, talking about the family. Though he is very friendly, I guess the rough years in politics have hardened him. He has perhaps become callous which may be, in a way, intentional and a self-protective armour. I think he means right but he has the wrong advisors.

was there for me to do but quit? I guess Indu distrusted me from the moment she assumed office. What was partly responsible was a remark by me which was twisted out of context. On her way to take the oath of office, she had dropped in. And when the journalists too swarmed all over my place asking me for my comments, I said, "I hope she will be able to guide the destiny of the nation with her frail hands." The reference to frail was not derogatory as she made it out to be. As a child she was always very ill and frail in those days. My

reference to frailty was also poetic, as a woman's hands are supposed to be frail.

I naturally campaigned against the Congress just after the Emergency. I could never imagine Indu being so harsh and ruthless. If people had earlier been surprised by her inner strength, I was not, because I had seen it all along in her. She was not afraid of her father or anyone else when it came to expressing her opinion. But what certainly surprised me was her shrewdness and

ruthlessness. These were traits that were never part of us Nehrus.

And I couldn't bear the Emergency, especially as I had seen trucks come out to Dehra Dun and pick people up for sterilisation just because they could not prove that they had only two children. Some of my servants too were picked up. Then there were teachers who used to complain to me that they could not draw their salaries unless they had got five people sterilised. Such was Sanjay Gandhi's Emergency.

I never liked Sanjay. He was never close to me. I know this is a singular statement coming from a grandmother, for amongst us a niece's child is like your grandchild. Sanjay was always a headstrong and self-willed boy and he was not affable like Rajiv. Sanjay was stubborn and wanted things done his own way. The Emergency was, in a sense typical of his attitude to life.

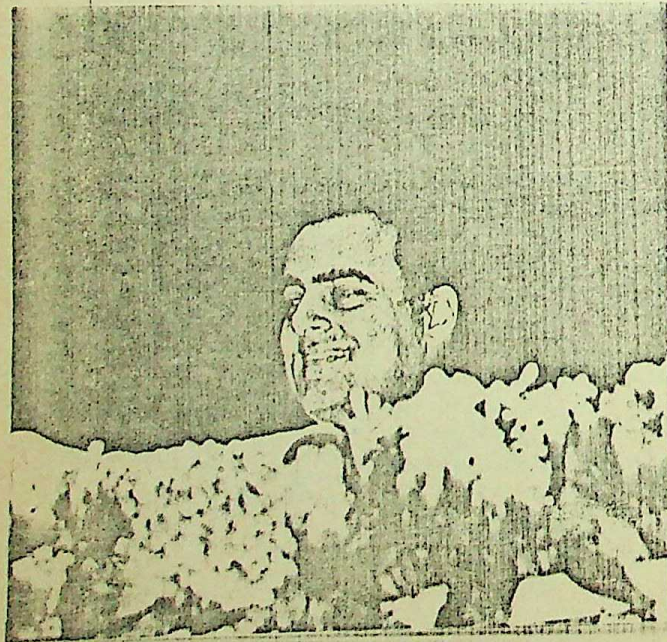
Having fought in the freedom struggle and having been a member of the country's first political family, I could not stand by idly and watch democratic institutions and traditions which had been carefully nurtured be trampled. So I campaigned against the Congress excesses. Of course, it is part of history now that the Congress was routed and Indira Gandhi too fell before the Janata wave. I believe she told some people that while I may not have been the main reason for the rout of the Congress in 1977, I was certainly responsible for her losing her seat.

I was not happy when Indu lost,

He has certainly made a few political mistakes; first he surrounded himself with his school friends, now he has been reinstating his mother's political advisors such as Dinesh Singh and Foteadar. He takes a correct stand so often but I don't know what happens when it comes to delivering. Perhaps it is the conflicting interests of his advisors which are responsible. In any case, Rajiv is losing out on a lot of goodwill from even amongst his die-hard supporters and I feel very sad about it.

In a larger sense, there has been a decline in the standards of leadership all around. Look at the people who were with Gandhi: Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel, Rajaji. And whom do we now have comparable with that stature? In Gandhiji's day you had to give up a lot to gain his favour. The situation is exactly the opposite today. People now join the Congress in order to extract something—whether it be money, position or whatever. The stakes are so high that I shudder to think what could happen at the next general elections.

I have no regrets except what I have often said, that I have wasted 10 years of my life. They were the years when my niece was the chief executive of this country, the years after I walked away from public life to retire to Dehra Dun. Even though I have led a very eventful life, I wish some more could be packed into it. I am happy I have left the din of Delhi. Because the capital is not the place to grow old in. Especially in my case, where it seems that I am not going to die. <sup>W</sup>





Giani Zail Singh's third heart attack in less than six years (the latest within six months of the second) is ascribed by his medical advisers to unusual strain. We all know what the strain was: the huge controversy in the press and outside over his candid talks with certain eminent journalists about the chain of events preceding his retirement from the office of President last July.

He spoke in some detail about the suggestions made to him to dismiss the prime minister and the accompanying offer of support for a second term as President, neither of which he accepted in practice, although he did entertain both for a while before he rejected them. An additional reason for the controversy (which has still not ended) was his reported statement that offers of financial support (Rs 30 to Rs 40 crore) were made to him for a campaign to get him re-elected.

There is no doubt now that the Giani was greatly upset by the publication of his talks with the journalists concerned, especially the long version carried by the *Weekly* as an 'interview'. He was in great agony over what he considered a breach of trust. The *Weekly* version, he says, was not an 'interview' but only a private talk he had with the editor for whom he has much regard. If the talk was taped, it was not on a visible instrument, and therefore it was unauthorised.

Whether the talk was actually taped or reconstructed as an interview from memory is a subject which belongs to the area of journalistic ethics of which the editor of the *Weekly* is the best judge. In any case the point of the present controversy is not the professional issue involved in the interview but Giani Zail Singh's candid talk on a highly touchy subject eight months after his retirement. Two separate questions arise from the Giani's action.

First, was it proper for him to open his mind to the press so soon after his retirement from the highest office in the land, knowing fully well that this would lay him open to the charge of grave impropriety and cause a political upheaval of sorts? Secondly, were the statements made by him, particularly the string of names mentioned in the 'interview', truthful or reeled off only, or mostly, to embarrass the ruling party and the prime minister? If the latter assumption is correct, why did he wish to rake up an old and unsavoury dispute with Rajiv Gandhi at this stage?

To take the question of propriety

first, the Giani has never made any bones about his deep feeling of hurt over the shabby manner in which the prime minister treated him. Much of what he told the press last month (and more) is going to be included in the autobiography he has been writing for the past four or five months. He does not want the history of his eventful career, especially the chronicle of the last six months of

ings.

Thus, in the Giani's eyes, the so-called impropriety on his part was not morally wrong if the 'interviewers' had not put words into his mouth and then presented them as his own statements made for the record. But he does not deny the fact that he talked frankly to people who called on him and who kept asking him about his recent past, notably the progress being made

## OPEN SESAME

Eight months after he stepped down from the presidency, Giani Zail Singh has chosen to rake up the events of those tension-filled days just prior to his retirement.

Was it proper for him to talk to the press at this juncture? And, more importantly, are his statements true or are they merely a ploy to embarrass the prime minister?

Prem Bhatia recollects the events of those tumultuous days and traces the cause for the animus between the first citizen and the country's chief executive.

his tenure at Rashtrapati Bhavan, to remain unrecorded and unknown to the public. He kept a diary of events in the latter part of his presidency.

According to the Giani, at least two Sikh leaders who had intimate knowledge of developments in Punjab before and after partition died without telling their side of the story. They were Giani Kartar Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh, each involved in his own way in the political history of Punjab immediately preceding independence and for a time afterwards. A third, Sardar Swaran Singh, still happily among us, has taken a vow of silence, says the Giani, thereby depriving the country of personal knowledge of what happened in and about Punjab and the Sikh community's share in the happen-

ings with his autobiography.

Now for the quantum of truth in the claims, allegations and straight information contained in the published 'interviews'. Let us recall, to start with, the political scenario at the beginning of 1987. The Giani did not approve of the postal censorship bill and went about consulting experts on the merits and justification of the proposed legislation. Let us recall too the controversy in Parliament over the Giani's complaint that he was being denied vital information on government business despite repeated requests that he should be kept in the picture. He had undoubtedly good reasons to complain bitterly when untruthful official statements in Parliament

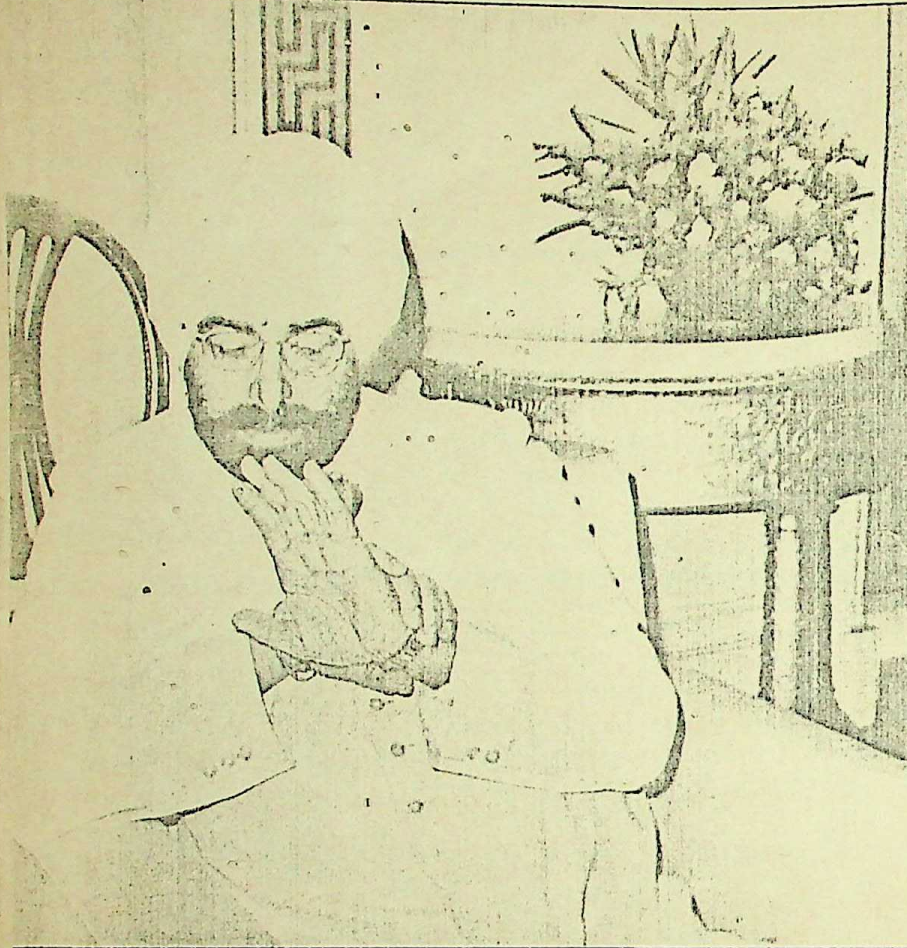
claimed that the required information was being supplied to the President.

Meanwhile, debate on the President's relations with the prime minister was hotting up in public and private conclaves. Giani Zail Singh received and heard everyone who had anything useful to say on the subject. Representatives of the Opposition tried to work him up, of course; but so did certain senior members of the ruling party with serious grievances against the prime minister. As a frequent visitor to Rashtrapati Bhavan those days (and journalists were always made welcome) I was witness on a few occasions to the goings-on in which dignitaries of the Congress-I, inside and outside the government, were an active party.

So strong were the pressures on







They all seemed influenced by the anti-Rajiv Gandhi wave at the time and told the Giani that the young prime minister was set on a course that would sink the ruling party and the government. Wouldn't he, therefore, step in and save both from disaster? Needless to say, the Opposition was not inspired by identical considerations.

Can you guess the name of the gentleman who was the first to suggest to the Giani that he—still holder of a high office—should be made prime minister? This was within minutes of the President landing at Palam from Yemen on October 31, 1984. Let us wait for the Giani to disclose the name. He has already let the cat among the pigeons, and a further scare among the birds won't help anybody.

Why Giani Zail Singh fell foul of Rajiv Gandhi is not a great secret any more. Before Indira Gandhi was assassinated she was caught up in a highly unpleasant dispute over the then President's stand on the 'Blue Star' operation. He says that he was never consulted about the operation or he would have strongly advised her against it. When he went to the Golden Temple in the wake of the army action he asked for forgiveness at the shrine and told Sikh critics that, although he was supreme commander of the defence forces, he had no hand in the operation. Indira Gandhi felt badly let down by the President because the entire blame for the storming of the temple was thereby transferred to her.

Rajiv Gandhi was not only a witness to this episode but was also advised caution against the Giani by his mother. A brief period after taking over as prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi abruptly cooled off towards the Giani for whose basically rustic manners he did not have much admiration anyway. He had never looked kindly upon the Giani's appointment as home minister and his later elevation to presidency. His opinion in the matter was known to his inner circle.

Now that the former President has been medically advised to avoid being agitated, we are unlikely to hear anything about the controversy in which he played the central role for some time. But the Giani never thought he had done anything wrong in frankly speaking to friends in the press. There is no doubt, however, that he was greatly embarrassed by the manner in which his views were presented. That is probably an indication of his innocence of the way journalists function, sometimes through a misunderstanding and occasionally with the desire to tell a story. ☐



**A brief period after taking over as prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi abruptly cooled off towards the Giani for whose basically rustic manners he did not have much admiration anyway.**

the Giani to seek a second term and to dismiss Rajiv Gandhi that only a highly shrewd and practical politician like the then President of India could have taken the sensible view that he finally did and refrained from taking the drastic steps that were advocated. That he seriously considered such steps goes without saying; but that he did not take such steps, in his and the country's interests, is now forgotten.

It is amusing to hear accusations of attempted sabotage and intrigue directed by the leaders and the small fry of the Congress-I against the Opposition in working up Giani Zail Singh to a mental state of revolt against the prime minister. The number of malcontents in the Congress-I who did precisely the same runs into double figures.



It is a misnomer to describe the late Sanjay Gandhi as a rough and arrogant man. Would you call someone haughty simply because he is firm in his approach and believes in strict discipline? That was the case with Rajiv Gandhi's younger brother, who was generally misunderstood because he was straight and did not encourage any kind of beating about the bush.

In the four years that I enjoyed intimacy with Sanjay, I think I got enough opportunity to judge the man within. A man of simple habits, he believed in neither drinking nor smoking and eschewed both *paan* and tea. Spending days together among the village folk of Amethi, he often preferred to eat with them. We often wondered how a person who was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and had seen the best of luxuries for nearly three decades of his life, could mingle freely with the crowds, listen to their problems and make sincere efforts to solve them.

It was, in fact, his honesty and sincerity that drew me closer to him. Right from our first meeting I felt that the man meant business. If he talked about changing the neglected and barren landscape of Amethi, one knew that he had something concrete in mind which would be quickly implemented.

The first time I met Sanjay was at the prime minister's house in Delhi some time in January 1976. Mrs. Gandhi had already made up her mind to field her son from the Amethi parliamentary constituency. My father Raja Ranajay Singh, who, besides being the ex-ruler of the place, had also represented the constituency, was therefore consulted on the issue. It was in this context that I had been given a five-minute appointment with Sanjay.

Waiting outside his room at the prime minister's residence which I was visiting for the first time, I was naturally tense, particularly because I had heard so many stories about the man's arrogance and his short temper.

When my turn came I was almost shivering. But within a few minutes I realised that my apprehensions were uncalled for. I found nothing scary about the person who was alleged to be a big *dada*. Though the conversation began on a cold note, with one straight question—"why have you not been taking an interest in family planning programmes?" which naturally left me shaky—he immediately sensed my nervousness and made me feel at home with a warm smile.

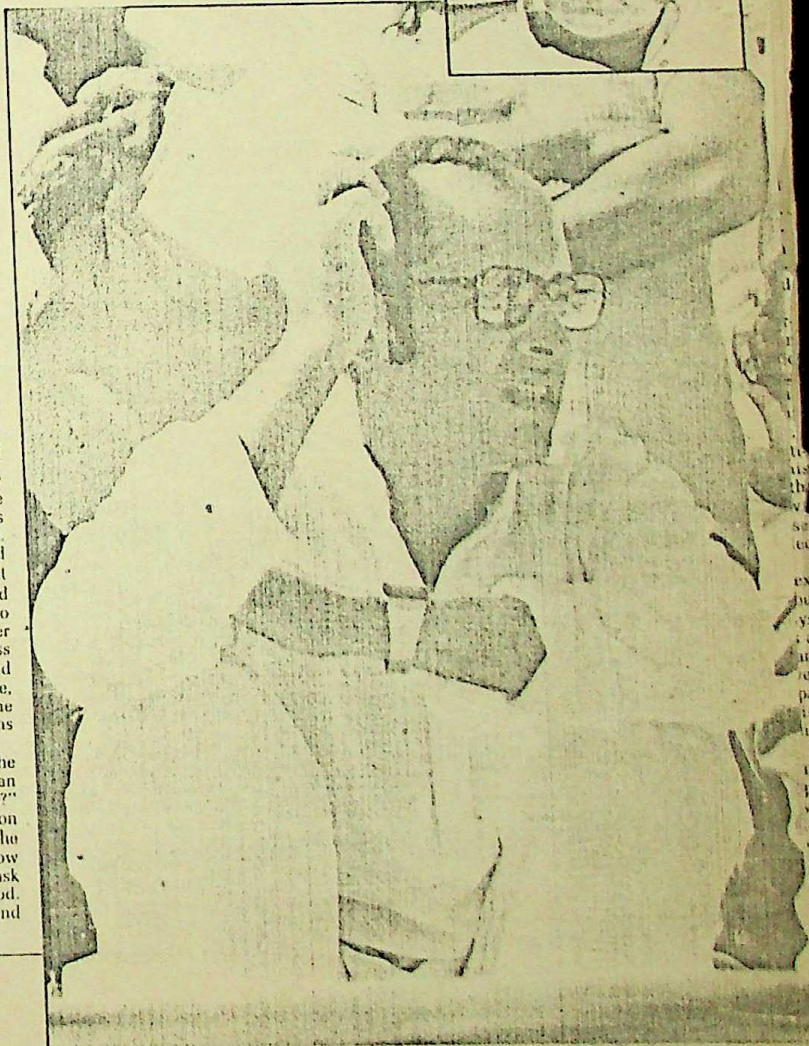
I had no answer to his straight question and the only way I thought I could get away with it was by explaining to him that my studies had kept me occupied. I went on to add that I also had no interest in politics. Ignoring the latter part of the reply, he advised me that regardless of being a student, I must take an active and keen interest in the family planning programme, which he felt was most essential to check the rising population—the root of all the problems in the country. I simply nodded my head.

Much to my relief, he instantly changed the subject and asked me, "Shall we hold an all-India Youth Congress camp in Amethi?" Getting a positive response from me, he went on to give a brief but precise outline of what he wanted me to do. He asked me specifically how much time I would require to carry out the task and told me to see him after the given period. With that I knew my five minutes were over and I took my leave.

Sanjay Gandhi's critics are legion. To many, he was the arrogant thruster whose political ambition would have led the country to disaster. To his coterie of admirers, though, he was the dynamic leader the country needed.

Sanjay Singh, who was once close to both brothers, reminisces about his warm friendship with Sanjay. And his growing disillusionment with Rajiv. As told to Sharat Pradhan.

## MY FRIEND, SANJAY





A 15-day camp of the Youth Congress was later organised in June in Amethi, in which, perhaps for the first time, a large number of student leaders from all over India participated. During this period I interacted with him a great deal, and was thoroughly impressed by his vibrant personality. Since he stayed with us in Amethi, I observed him at close quarters. It was then that I realised how simple and polite he was.

However, perhaps because of his non-sense approach, Sanjay was misunderstood by a lot of people. He might have been harsh sometimes but the phase would soon pass and he would once again be his normal self. I remember one such incident with Veer Bahadur Singh, the present chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, who was then, in 1977, a deputy minister in the state council of ministers.

Sanjay Gandhi was on one of his usual marathon tours of Amethi and since he always chose to be at the wheel himself, carrying a road map was essential. V B Singh was entrusted

with the task of carrying the map, but somehow he forgot and realised it only much after we had driven off, when Sanjay enquired about it. That was the day I witnessed his temper. Without a second thought, Sanjay, who appeared terribly disgusted, told Veer Bahadur to get out of the vehicle. There was no scope for argument and Veer Bahadur obeyed, though with obvious hesitation.

But Sanjay's temper was not to last long and when Veer Bahadur later showed up at the dak bungalow where the party had halted for the night, the youth leader smiled and called him in again. Later we came to know that poor Veer Bahadur had to walk some distance before he could get any transport.

At the same time Sanjay did not also hesitate to punish those people whose wrongdoings or corrupt practices were brought to his notice. Way back in 1976, a complaint was made to him against a Congress leader, Baba Shiv Prasad Misra, who was alleged to have taken a bribe of Rs 15 lakhs from a Karnataka-based transporter, for supplying chassis for trucks and buses on a priority basis. When the matter was brought to Sanjay's notice, he immediately summoned Misra and told him in no uncertain terms to not only return every paisa that he had taken but also never to show his face again. It is an irony that the same man has now been given a Rajya Sabha ticket by Sanjay's brother Rajiv.

Of course, Misra's nomination does not come as a surprise, as time has already shown how different the two brothers are. If it had not been for Sanjay's untimely end the Indian political scenario would have been very different today. Even though Rajiv has managed to attain his position by accident, he functions on the basis of hearsay and on the suggestions of personal friends, not advisers. Sanjay was the last one to take a decision on the basis of unconfirmed reports, and personal friends did not figure on his list of political advisers.

Rajiv was not cut out to be a politician from the beginning, and that was why Indira had drafted out a political career only for the younger son. She always saw greater political potential in Sanjay than in Rajiv.

While the younger son took pride and enjoyed being amidst people, the older one always chose to avoid the public. He became the prime minister all right but could never become a real politician.

I remember how disgustingly he reacted to the welcome he received on his first visit to Amethi, when he came to file his nomination papers for the parliamentary by-election following Sanjay's death in 1980. A large crowd had collected to welcome him and slogans of "Rajiv Gandhi zindabad, Sanjay Gandhi amar rahen" rent the air. Garlands and flowers were showered on him wherever he went. On returning to the inspection house, where he was lodged, Rajiv's first reaction was, "Kahan phas gaye" (Oh, where am I trapped?).

Rajiv could not accomplish even a fraction of what Sanjay did for the people of Amethi. On the contrary he changed the development plans so that much of today's development seems to have taken place in the wrong sectors, to the disadvantage of the local masses.

Rajiv's much-talked-about march into the 21st century has led him to concentrate only on large and heavy industries. No doubt, these giant structures of steel and concrete have become

symbols of prestige for Amethi, but have they provided the much desired relief to the masses? The answer is a big 'no'.

I remember how uncomfortable Rajiv was when first asked to wear a kurta-pyjama. He was virtually forced to switch over from western attire to the Gandhian khadi. With Sanjay it was different, as he had himself been responsible for creating the kurta-pyjama-shawl-chappal culture among the Congress youth.

Initially, when Rajiv slipped into kurta-pyjamas and plunged into politics, there was little doubt about his being honest. Thanks to his great mother, he had picked up the qualities of a statesman-politician. For as long as she lived Mrs Gandhi kept him safe from any evil influences. For death not only deprived him of her seasoned political advice but also gave rise to the bad influence of his personal friends who, lacking a political background, sought self-aggrandisement in public life.

Certain friends sought the dominating influence of Sonia Gandhi to bring Rajiv around to their line of thinking. Much to the nation's misfortune, any sane advice from true friends and honest colleagues was simply unwelcome to the new prime minister, which led his one-time best friend, Arun Singh, to quit politics. And a close cousin like Arun Nehru, who had always enjoyed the confidence of Mrs Gandhi and who was responsible for making Rajiv her successor, also soon found no place in the new set-up.

I was too insignificant to interfere where the two powerful Aruns had failed, yet our old association and the Amethi connection allowed me to take some liberties and point out where he was going wrong. But I soon realised that my suggestions and advice fell on deaf ears and were sometimes even misconstrued by the person whom I had always treated as an elder brother. After all, there was a time when we were so close that some of our clothes were tailored at the same place, we wore identical wrist-watches and even identical shoes.

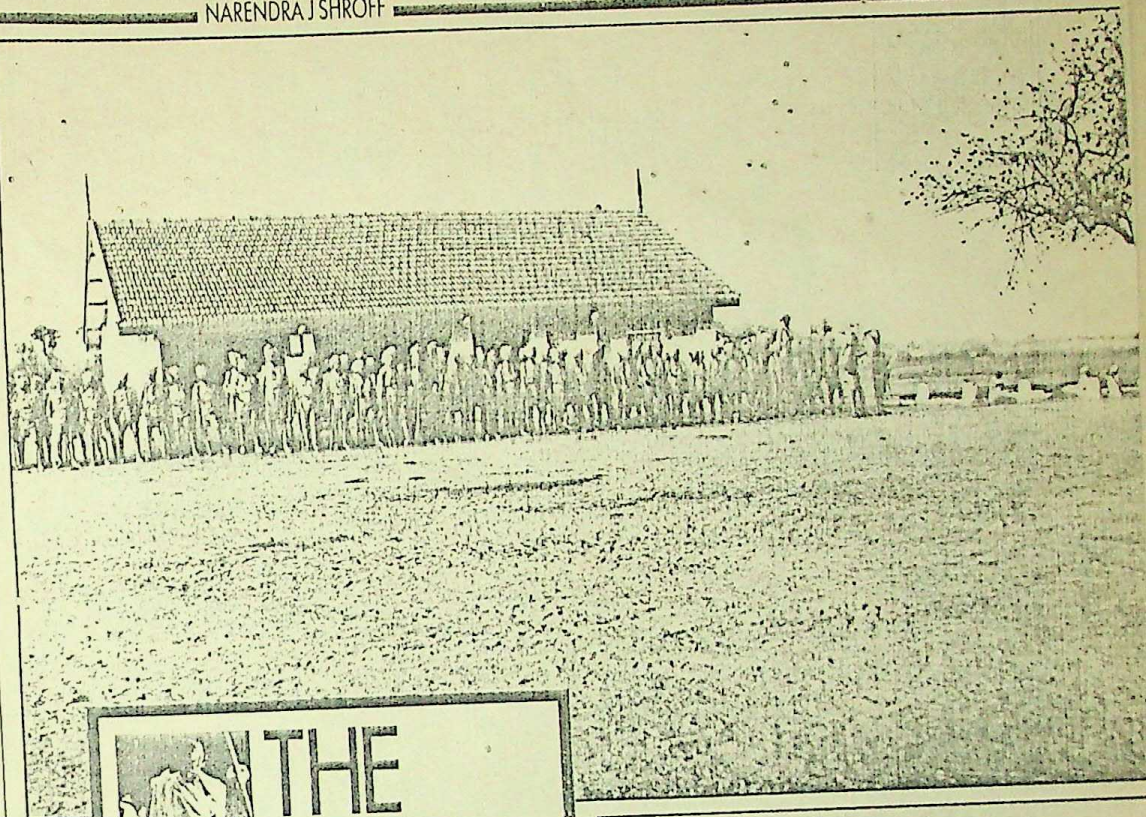
My worst experience was when he called me once, some time towards the end of 1986, and told me to 'keep an eye' on someone whom I always believed was extremely close to him. I do not wish to mention names as I have no intention of embarrassing Rajiv. But it really astonished me when he insisted that the person he was referring to had to be kept under 'strict vigil'. In the beginning he led me to believe that he was reposing greater faith and confidence in me than in that person, but what gave me the biggest shock was when I learnt that the same person had been asked to keep an eye on me! I came to know that he had played the same trick on a few others as well.

From that moment, I lost all reverence for and faith in Rajiv. I was now convinced that the man could change colours faster than a chameleon, and the time had come for me to sever all connections with him. The well-meaning, soft-spoken and honest man whom I had followed simply because he had stepped into the shoes of his dynamic brother and great mother, was no more. The man whom I had regarded as an embodiment of Sanjay Gandhi and who was expected to follow in the footsteps of Indira Gandhi, had belied all my hopes and was dead. Only an imposter lives.



PHOTOFEATURE

NARENDRA J SHROFF



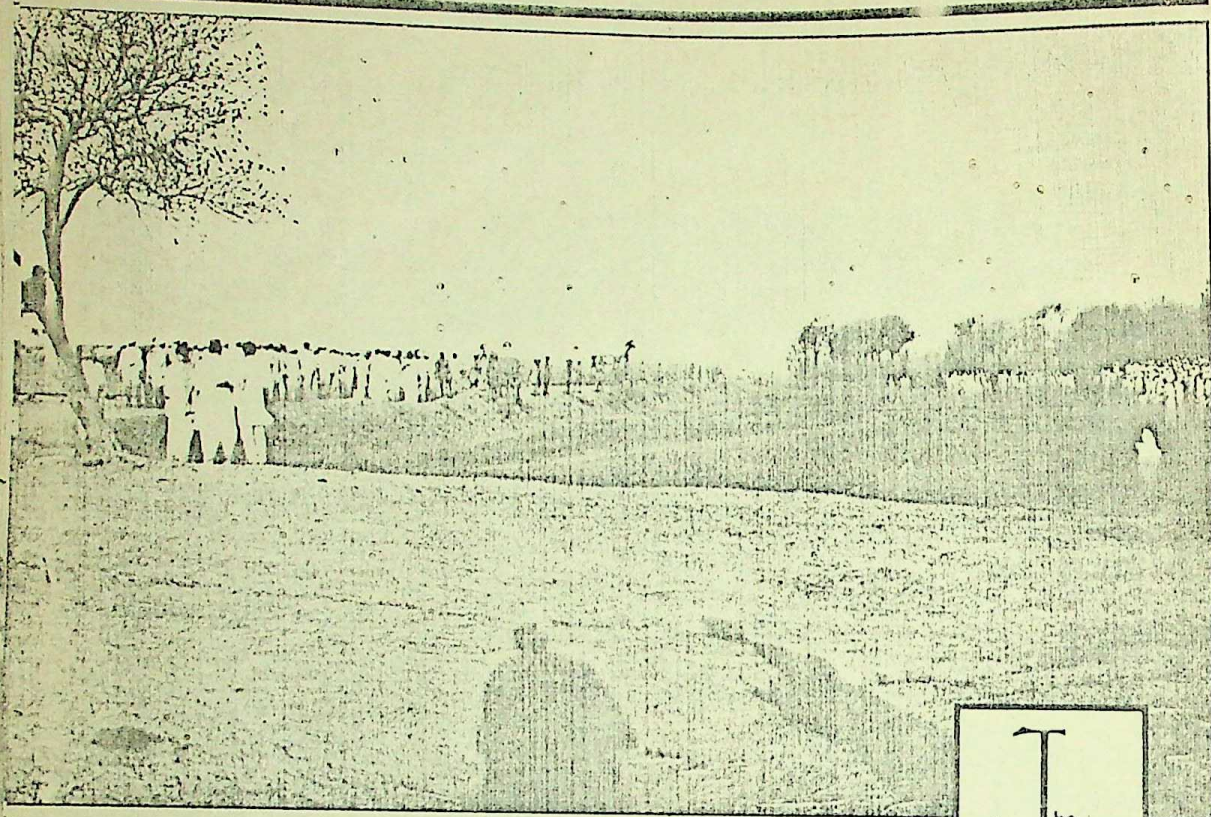
# THE DANDI MARCH

Three issues back we carried an essay by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on the relevance of the Dandi march to our times. And what, he felt, was the Mahatma's real message in organising it.

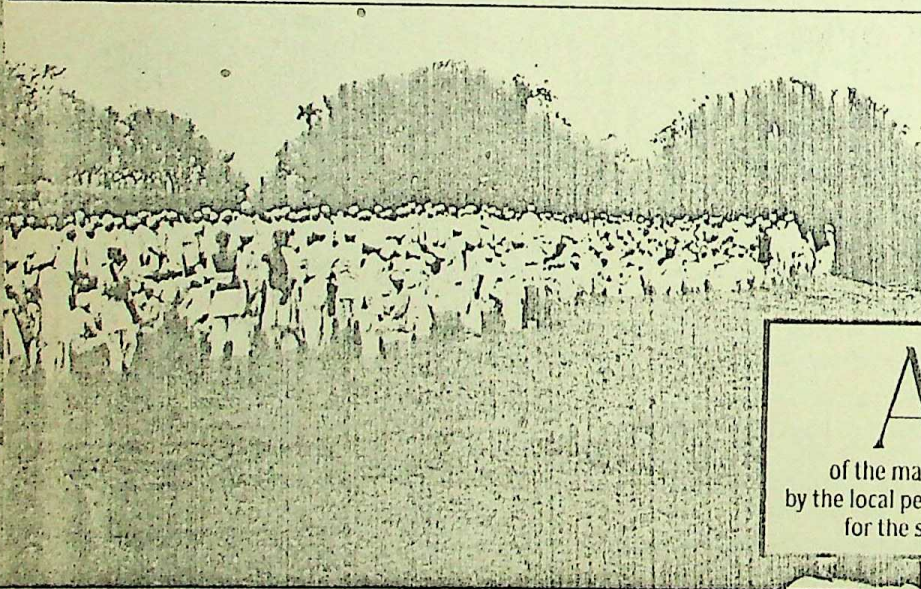
Here, we carry a nostalgic photofeature on the march: taken from the personal archives of Narendra J Shroff, who was an eyewitness to the satyagraha and recorded it for posterity.







The police watch the satyagrahis lining up for the start of the march. There is tension in the air.

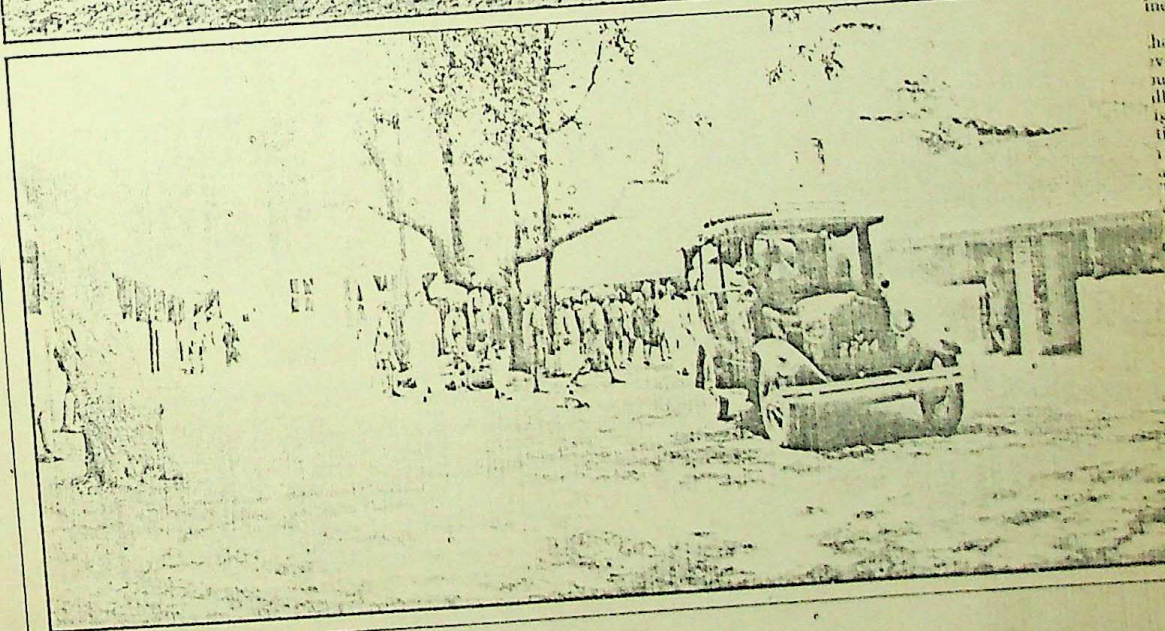
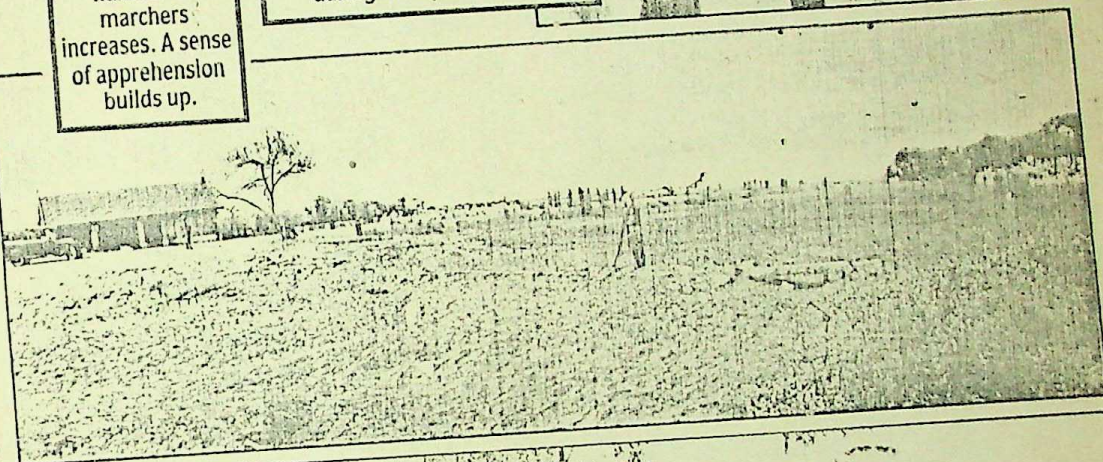


A close up of the marchers, watched by the local people as they prepare for the symbolic walk.



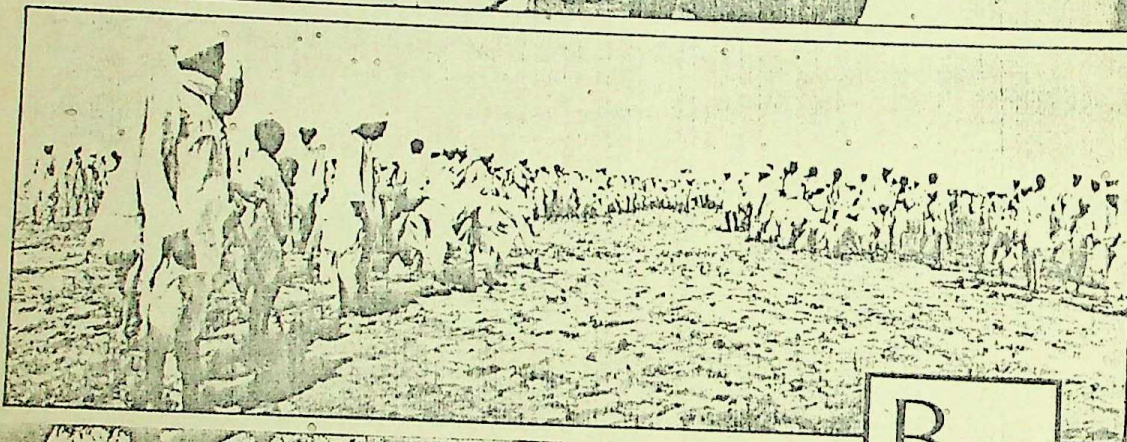
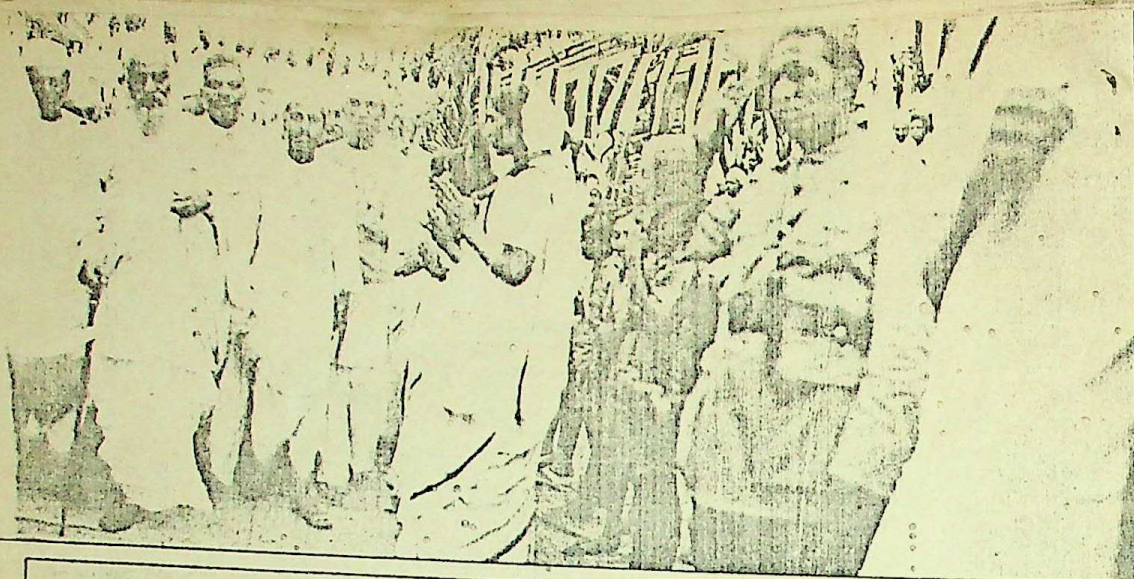
**P**olice reinforcements arrive as the number of marchers increases. A sense of apprehension builds up.

**V**ithalbhai Patel and other satyagrahis in the Rampur area of the historic city of Surat during the Dandi march.

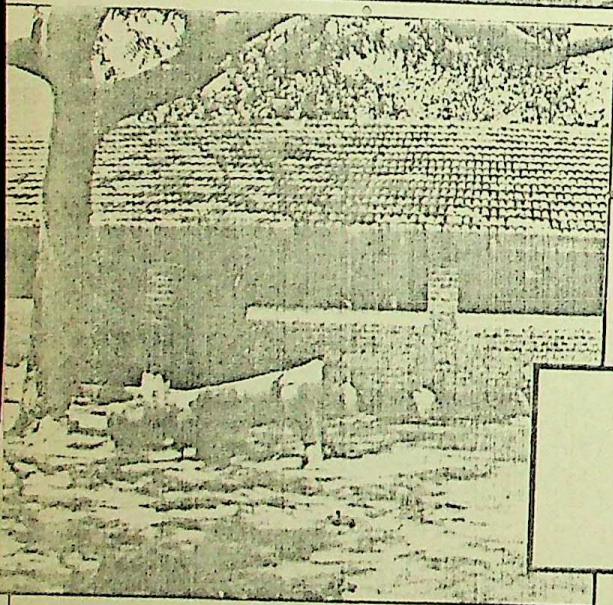


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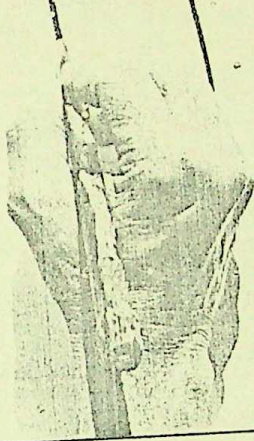
**B**reaking  
the salt law. The  
symbolic act of  
protest that has  
inspired  
generations of  
Indians since.



**T**he satyagrahis  
are arrested and taken to the barracks  
in police vehicles.



عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ عِلْمَ الْإِنْسَانِ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ



## THE WORD

The theory that writing is divine is inherent in all ancient systems. But no religion has utilised it with such effectiveness as Islam. The Arabic script thus remains the most striking visual of the Muslim faith.

Nirmal Goswami discusses the tremendous influence of Arabic calligraphy on Islamic society.

The desire to understand the world may not yet be an outdated folly. One could therefore make a rather esoteric beginning with the word and its image. This does not necessarily mean an expedition into linguistic philosophy. Scholars like Dr Ernest Gellner have undertaken such tasks with stupefying effect. He holds that linguistic philosophy "has an inverted vision which treats genuine thought as a disease and dead thought as a paradigm of health".

Our purpose here is to dwell on the mystical power of the alphabet and letters. This, hopefully, will lead to a conclusion which I describe as visual culture. Before we proceed towards that conclusion, however, it would be useful to observe a certain unity of thought in the evolution of the script.

Writing is widely believed to be a gift from the gods. Letters and characters are divinely inspired and they are objects of the highest veneration. John Stevens, author of *Sacred Calligraphy of the East*, maintains that the holy script has continued for centuries, primarily through the vehicle of Buddhism, to develop different forms of expression. Right up to the present day.

Opinions differ on the indepen-

dent origins of the great writing systems like Sumerian, Egyptian, Cretan, Hittite, Indic and Chinese. Some scholars contend that an alphabet first arose among a Semitic people, perhaps the Assyrians or Hebrews. The Hindu pundits insist that India was the original source of writing. The Chinese aver that their written characters are the oldest, the best and the most beautiful.

One idea, however, is common to all the ancient systems. Writing is divine. It is inherently holy. It has the powers to teach the highest mysteries. Writing is the speech of the gods.

Toth, the scribe of the gods, initiated the Egyptians into the art of writing. Their script was named 'the divine'. When he gave the Commandments to the Hebrews, Jehovah engraved the letters with his finger. Nebo, the Assyrian god, revealed the nature of cuneiform to his people. The Chinese characters were modelled after the movement of stars, the footprints of birds and other patterns which occurred in nature. This was accomplished by Cangjio, the four-eyed dragon-faced wizard. In India, the supreme god Brahma himself gifted the knowledge of letters to men. The Vedic hymns to the gods (circa 1400-1000 BC) were authorless. These were

said to have been 'heard' rather than composed by the Aryan seers. But eventually, these hymns emerged in the holy script of Sanskrit.

Brahmilipti, another sacred script, came into full use only after the arrival of Buddhism. Buddha (564-486 BC) insisted that his teaching be transmitted to all people in their own languages. Ashoka the Great (273-236 BC) built pillars across the land announcing his celebrated conversion and the glories of Buddha. The edicts were in Prakrit, Brahmi and Kharosthi. This long, hoary history of the script and calligraphy proves a general rule. Writing, like music and painting, began in religion and acquired divine grace. Writing, in particular, came in for adoration as the ideal form of beauty.

And no writing in the world is as sacred and as representative of a religion and a culture as the Arabic script. Throughout the Islamic world of sprawling territories and teeming population centres, this script is venerated as an object of extraordinary importance. The exceptional significance of this writing derives from the fact that the Arabic script was used to create the Quran. The Quran is the holiest

text of Islam and the visual embodiment of Allah's message to mankind. The script is awash with a spiritual force which no other religion or culture has ever enshrined into a comparable system.

Sanskrit, Brahmi, Prakrit, Kharosthi, Chinese, Egyptian, even Japanese alphabets are imbued with religious significance. Calligraphy, a word of Greek origin means, quite simply, beautiful writing. Anonymous monks in the Middle Ages produced vast quantities of this writing in Europe. This too was a manifestation of faith. But it never quite permeated down to secular circles. In any case, Gutenberg's moveable type killed it off in the fifteenth century.

Against these calligraphic experiences which have slowly but inevitably merged into secular systems, the Arabic script remains ever, the strongest image of Islam. A single Arabic word can convey not the religion which it encompasses, but an entire culture, a civilisation and mores which it embodies. This is immensely facilitated by the fact that the Islamic faith integrates the spiritual and the temporal life of the believer in more ways than any other major religion does.

Thus Islam presents a world where the script signifies everything that is holy, noble, beautiful



Islam presents a world  
where the sacred  
signifies the eternal  
that is only, infinite,  
beautiful and enduring.

and enduring. Even the illiterate can understand and relate to this world through the symbolic power of the script. Calligraphy pervades just about everything in the Islamic world.

It is an act of adoration in manuscripts. It appears on coins, jewellery, on architecture and edifices, on numerous forms of the decorative arts, on textiles and weapons and armour, in paintings, on tools and utensils, on tiles and tablets, on floors and ceilings, on windows and ramparts. It would be impossible to fully understand the Islamic world without an appreciation of this immense array of calligraphic imagery. This is the visual culture of Islam in which the image of the word interprets the world to the beholder.

A stunning facet of this culture is its chronological and geographical pervasiveness. It spans centuries, leaps time zones, appears and reappears across continents in its immutable form. The fundamental reason for this was brought home to me most forcefully, not very long ago, by *Introduction to Quranic Script*. It is a recent book written by Dr Sayed Barkat Ahmad, a dear friend and a rare scholar. Trained in the disciplines of linguistics, literature, law and history, he has collected two doc-

A retired career diplomat, Dr Ahmad has spent a lifetime serving India and studying the methodology of teaching the Quran and the Arabic language. His book showed me in abundant clarity that the central fact of Islamic culture is the Quran, and Islamic calligraphy owes its origins to the revelation of Islam's holy book. This too explains its immutability.

We have already observed that Islamic calligraphy is a great unifying force among believers the world over. To this Dr Ahmad adds: "Today, in spite of the recession of the Arabic language to the borders of Arab states, as opposed to its medieval role as a lingua franca, the Arabic script still ex-

presses two great Indo-Aryan cultures, the cultures of Urdu and Persian-speaking peoples. In fact, the largest number of Arabic scribes in the world are today trained in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent." Dr Ahmad, who has been gravely ill in New York city for the past four years, will be happy if this observation brings about a new understanding between the two truculent neighbours.

However, the fact that Islamic calligraphy is an expression of piety is not always correctly remembered. Nor the belief that piety, to the believer, brings forgiveness of sins. Nevertheless, writing of verses from the Quran has been and will remain an aesthetic route to religious experiences. And that experience repeats itself in numerous manifestations in the vast visual culture of Islam.

As Islamic conquests swept through Persia and Turkey, the word came to symbolise the Islamic theocracy. The word came to legitimise the theocracy. Allah had chosen the Arabic language for his final revelation. By virtue of that, the Arabic script came to represent power and authority. This authority also devolved on the Hadith which are the sayings of the

Prophet Muhammad, Allah's messenger on earth. Between the Quran, Allah's words and the Hadith, is held a body of scriptures which virtually exhaust the sacred texts of Islam. And calligraphy carried them to the limits of a visual theocracy.

This was a powerful counterpoint to the icons of other faiths, particularly those of the conquered peoples. The visual theocracy was thus an effective means of separating the Muslim world from the rest. The word appeared on coins to inscribe the ruler's name and not his face. This established power, authority and legitimacy. The word blossomed on documents, doorways and minarets. The word adorned every conceivable surface within reach of the human hand. It was an epic epigraphic triumph which centuries would not obliterate.

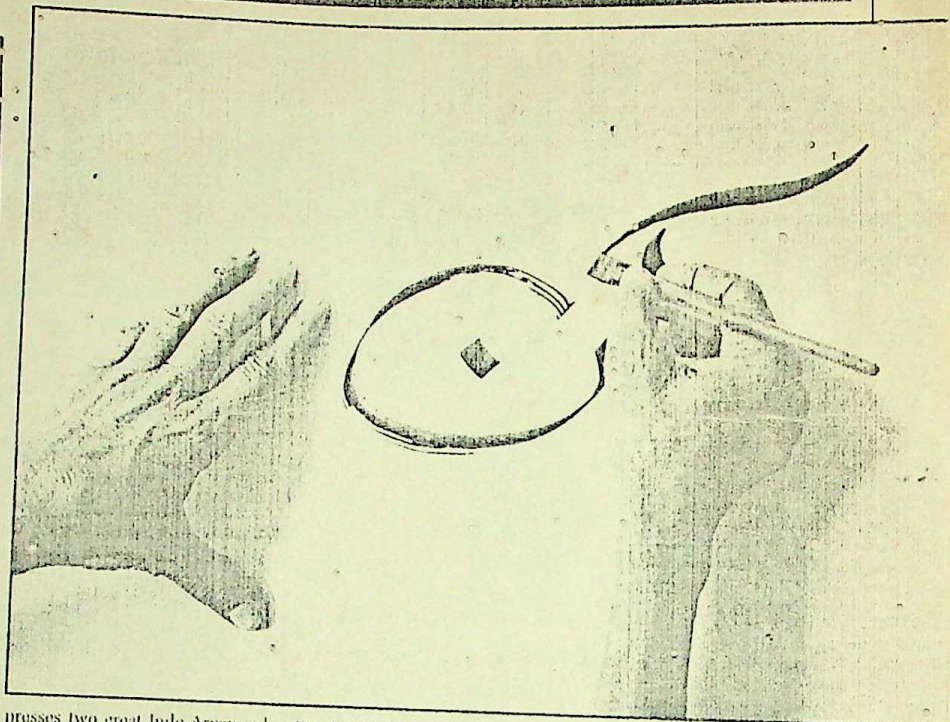
Straddling, as it did, such a commanding vista of the theocracy, the script became both a social and a personal obsession. Anthony Welch emphasises this in *Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World*: "The writing of the Quran was a pious act, in which not only professional scribes but also rulers and the more ordinary devout and literate Muslims engaged. The writing of the asma 'al-husna (the

ninety-nine most beautiful names of Allah) as well as the names of the Prophet, his kin and the imams were also favoured religious activities, while a beautiful rendering of the *bismillah* (the words "in the name of Allah" that begin the Quran, almost every pious statement, and until modern times, every book) was thought to bring forgiveness of sins."

The extraordinary depth and range of the visual culture of Islam could, of course, be fully relied upon to catapult calligraphy to such obsessive levels.

Emperor Aurangzeb, the self-proclaimed defender of the faith in India made a fetish of copying the Quran as an ongoing act of piety. Many of these efforts were occasions of public display. There were no royal photo opportunity sessions for the media in those days. But the monarch seems to have been acutely conscious of his image as a devout Muslim. And he projected it with commendable effect.

The photo opportunity came much later when the Morarji Desais of the world took to spinning the Gandhian *charkha* and appointed hours to feed the news cameras. The *charkha* too was a powerful image. Alas, it did not survive to become a living culture. But that's another story.





# Communal Violence in India

## A Study of Communal Disturbance in Delhi

Gopal Krishna

*Communalism is a pervasive phenomenon in Indian public life and communal violence is a particularly ugly expression of it. This force has had devastating consequences for the nation in the past, and has gravely retarded the process of integration in the post-independence period.*

*The extent, the causes, the participants and the cost of communal disturbances since independence require careful scrutiny, which is attempted in this paper with the help of the data available in Section I. Sections II and III present a detailed report on the communal riot in Delhi of May 1974. Section II provides an account of the riot, and Section III reports the results of a post-riot survey.*

*The paper is being published in two parts. The second part, comprising Sections II and III, will appear next week.*

### Introduction

A diversification among human communities is essential for the provision of the incentive and material for the Odyssey of the human spirit. Other nations of different habits are not enemies; they are godsends. Men require of their neighbours something sufficiently akin to be understood, something sufficiently different to provoke attention, and something great enough to command admiration.

— A N Whitehead: "Science and the Modern World"

THAT heterogeneity is a good thing because of the creative possibilities through constructive interaction it offers is the dominant liberal view in contemporary India. This view informs the public rhetoric of 'unity through diversity' as the primary characteristic of Indian culture and of the cultural and historical processes at work in this country. This is a humane and pragmatically sensible position to adopt for a society as heterogeneous as our own is self-evident. And yet it is obvious to any student of our society and history that heterogeneity has produced a great deal of conflict and violence, which has had the effect of accentuating divisions, impeding the processes of social integration, and inhibiting creative interaction. The immediate post-independence trend towards national integration received a set back in the early part of the 1960s, and since then inter-group conflict has increased, whether it is conflict between the higher castes and the Harijans, between Hindus and Muslims, and not between Hindus and Sikhs.

Inter-group conflict seems to be an inescapable aspect of public life in heterogeneous societies. Stability of such societies is precarious. The medley of peoples constituting them, in the words of J S Furnival, "mix but do not combine." Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas

and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the market place, in buying and selling.<sup>1</sup> The heterogeneity of a plural society has but few creative possibilities. It is held together by regulations, not by integration, and "lacking a common social life, men in plural society became decivilised . . ."<sup>2</sup> The governing principle ordering the relations between the constituent groups in such societies is power, and there is a structural necessity for domination by one of the groups, acquiesced into by others, in order to sustain the political order.

India is a half-way house between the plural society as described by Furnival and a differentiated but coherent society envisaged in Whitehead's observation cited above. It is appropriately characterised as an 'agglomerative' society by the late Irawati Karve in her illuminating essay.<sup>3</sup> An agglomerative society is loosely held together, has a historically evolved shared value framework, and therefore not brute power but shared culture forms the basis of the minimum necessary cohesion for an ordered collective life. Its social structure changes extremely slowly because it is grounded in an essentially stagnant agrarian political economy. When the economy begins to be transformed radically the social structure experiences great strain and the inevitable change in group status may well be accompanied by social violence. We have seen something of this happening in India in recent decades. But essentially the process can be viewed as one of 'creative adjustment', leading to a new form of integration of society.

The phenomenon of communal violence, on the other hand, seems to me to be qualitatively different. Hindu-Muslim relations have had the dual character of being governed by power and accommodation, and consequently the tension between the two communities endemic, sometimes, though only rather infrequently, spilling over into mutual violence. A

careful study of history would confirm that over a long period power was the dominant factor in ordering Hindu-Muslim relations, and the role of religion in fashioning our different civilisations has been so profound that it has precluded mutual influence at the higher level of culture. But the shared division of labour and a shared popular culture made for social accommodation, minimising communal conflict, especially in the rural society.

Incidents of communal disturbance have been recorded at least since the early 18th century. There was a riot in Ahmedabad in 1714, centering round Holi celebration and cow slaughter questions. There was a Hindu-Muslim riot in Kashmir in 1719-20, in Delhi in 1729, in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra in 1786, occasioned by an attack on a religious procession. During the first half of the 19th century there were several communal disturbances in north India. C A Bayly, of Cambridge University, reports that these occurred at Banaras (1809-15), Koil (1820), Moradabad, Sambhal, Kashipur (1833), Shahjahanpur (1837), Bareilly, Kanpur and Allahabad (1837-52), among other places.<sup>4</sup> Among the causes of these clashes was the downgrading of the Muslim state functionaries, and the consequent decline of Muslim dominance, following the British conquest of the area.

Among the common causes of Hindu-Muslim conflict have been cow slaughter and religious processions playing music before mosques. Thus in 1871 Rama Navami and Muharram celebrations coincided and led to riots in Bareilly and Pilibhit. In 1893 major disturbances took place in Azamgarh district over cow sacrifice. Behind these was the Hindu movement for the protection of the cow. The cow question has been important at least since the middle ages. Akbar had prohibited cow-slaughter in his empire.



January 12, 1985

## ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY

and the local successor rulers to the Mughal empire had also prohibited it. In 1847 the British banned cow-slaughter in Amritsar, and Bahadur-Shah Zafar did so during the 1857 rebellion. The cow protection movement had been started around 1870 in Punjab by the Namdhari Kuka sect of Sikhs, which later spread to north-west India as well as to UP and Bihar. In 1893 in Mau (Azamgarh) a dispute arose between Hindus and Muslims over the interpretation of the government order prohibiting 'all cow sacrifices'. The riots that followed spread over a very wide area, encompassing UP, Bihar, Gujarat, and Bombay and claimed 107 lives. There were 22 riots in Bihar, affecting the districts of Saran, Patna and Gaya. The largest number of deaths occurred in Bombay.<sup>6</sup>

Elsewhere in India riots took place in the Malabar area in 1873, 1885, 1894 and 1896; in the Central Provinces in 1889; in Nasik district of Maharashtra in 1894; in Porbandar in 1895. In Punjab between 1881 and 1893 nine disturbances of differing degrees of severity occurred, of which the Multan riot of 1881 was particularly severe.

But communal disturbances were not a regular feature of life in India in the 19th century. In the 20th century the picture has gradually changed. The Government of India in their memorandum to the Indian Statutory Commission (1930),<sup>7</sup> mention riots in East Bengal in 1907, Peshawar in 1910, Ajodhya in 1912, Agra in 1913, Shahabad in 1917 and Katarpur in 1918. The frequency of riots increased during the 1920s and every province was affected.<sup>8</sup> The Moplah rebellion of 1921 had strong communal aspects. There were riots in Malegaon (1921), Multan (1922), Lahore, Amritsar, Shaharanpur (1923). The year 1924 saw some major outbreaks, in Allahabad, Calcutta, Delhi, Gulburga, Jubbulpore, Kohat, Lucknow, Nagpur, Shahajahanpur among them. From 1925 on a new cause, namely religious conversion, came to be added to the existing sources of conflict. New militant organisations of Hindus, Shuddhi and Sangathan launched by the Arya Samaj, and Tanjeem and Tabligh among the Muslims added to the scale of communal violence. The major riots of Calcutta and Bombay, of 1926 and 1928 respectively, resulted in very large number of casualties and damage to property; in Calcutta, in a series of 3 riots 141 persons were killed and 1296 were injured; in Bombay in 1928 the death toll was 117 and the injured 791. The story of the 1930s and the 1940s is, if anything, more depressing. The 1931 riot in Kanpur resulted in the killing of 294 persons and injuring of 2529. In the Bombay riot of

1932, 214 persons were killed and 2686 injured; in the riot of 1936, 65 were killed and 509 injured. If we take only the major riots between 1924 and 1940, the total number of persons killed was 1,175, and the injured 7,615. In the 1940s the major riots were part of the movement for partition and the scale of violence enormous. By then communal riots had become an instrument of politics.<sup>9</sup> The history of communal conflict since independence is reviewed in the next chapter.

Communal riots are accompanied by acts of individual violence, commonly stabbing, and looting and burning of property. More revealingly they take the form of mass warfare: in accounts of communal riots mobs of different sizes varying from 100 to 10,000 confronting each other, throwing stones at each other and generally keeping an adversary at bay, are reported. There are also frequent cases of groups of people attacking weakly defended areas of the adversary community. The most endangered lives are of those people living in the midst of or close to the adversary community. In the attacks the targets chosen are mosques and temples, shops and establishments, and private houses. Neither women nor children are spared. And although in nearly all the riots there are instances of humanity, courage and mutuality, the legacy they leave behind is one of bitterness, hostility and suspicion.

Why do communal riots occur? What purposes, if any, do they serve? What conditions aggravate communal conflict? These are extremely difficult questions to which Indian social science has not addressed itself with the requisite degree of seriousness. The Indian discussions of this subject have been simplistic and moralistic. The simplistic explanation of communal conflict in pre-independence period was in terms of the imperialist conspiracy of divide and rule. This is now being replaced by a Marxist equivalent, i.e. it is the capitalist conspiracy. At a more sophisticated level communal conflict is sought to be explained by Marxists as an inevitable consequence of the contemporary capitalist order.<sup>10</sup> Among the non-Marxists there are at least three strands: The first one could be said to represent the view that communal conflict is in truth a result of mutual ignorance; only if the Hindus and the Muslims knew that all religions were 'fundamentally' one, and if they approached each other with goodwill, there will be no conflict. This is a Hindu religiously-oriented point of view which characterised and reflections of the late Bhagwandas.<sup>11</sup>

The second strand is represented by the power theory of communal conflict. This

holds that given the strongly developed communal identities Hindus and Muslims were bound to conflict over the question of who is to control the state because control over state power is of primary importance in preserving the culture and identity of the community and promoting the welfare of its members. This theory lay at the source of the Muslim League's demand for partition, which Jinnah believed to be in the interest not only of the Muslims but also of the Hindus.

The third strand takes communal conflict, in the post-independence context, to be a part of the competitive political process, except that it ought to be rendered free of violence. The argument here is that democracy flourishes when there is group competition, that in India we have a group structure primarily consisting of religious communities and competition between them as well as the constraints they might succeed in imposing upon the state are likely to strengthen democracy. This is the view advanced by Humayun Kabir.<sup>12</sup>

Lastly there is the Hindu communalist theory that views minorities as enemies of the nation and communal violence as deliberate acts intended to humiliate and injure the Hindus. Its counterpart is the Muslim communalist theory which views communal violence as well-organised, pre-planned Hindu attacks designed to terrorise the Muslims, to depress them, to drive them out of their own areas, to reduce them to second-class citizens.

On these 'theories' the question 'Why communal riots occur?' can be answered as follows: The Marxist answer would be (a) it is a conspiracy of the capitalist class to divide the working class, or (b) it is incipient fascism of an unsteady, underdeveloped capitalism, or (c) uneven access to economic resources leads to violence; the religious answer is that riots take place because of mutual ignorance of true religion and ill-will born of that ignorance; the power theory's answer will be that violence occurs because the communities have been denied power; the 'democratic' theory's answer will be that violence occurs because of the restricted power of groups and that violence is part of a well-designed conspiracy to achieve dominance.

From these formulations emerge recommendations for policies designed to control and eventually abolish communal violence. Each of them seems to me to present very great difficulties. Experience has taught us that communal violence is an expression of frustration in one context but it is an instrument of power in another; more power to the communities, or greater scope for communal self-



expression in a democracy, can aggravate communal conflict and ultimately disrupt the state. There is no evidence of a pre-planned conspiracy behind any of the riots that have been carefully investigated by various inquiry commissions, and the communalist theory, therefore, seems to me to lack support.

Communal conflict does not seem to me to originate in the ignorance of 'true religion' but in the struggle for autonomy on the part of one or more groups and there is an inescapable conflict between their drive for autonomy and the cohesion of the state in a multi-religious society. Politicisation of religion, conditions of extreme scarcity, and a particularly divisive style of politics aggravate the problem which appears to be basic to heterogeneous societies. The institutional structure for overcoming the pluralist impediments to integration is in place in India. It is well conceived. But the dangers to it are now serious. The re-emergence of the Muslim League and the recent events in Punjab should leave no one in doubt about the outcome of the political process since independence, especially over the past two decades.

The communal problem encompasses social, economic, religious, political, cultural and intellectual spheres—indeed, nothing escapes it because it is concerned with the collective, and through it the individual, life of every member of the community. The solidarity sentiment runs

along religious lines because of the shared traditions and culture. A perceived threat to them causes anxiety. It is not only that men identify themselves with the community as the bearer of those traditions and culture that define them but see a danger to themselves in the weakening of it. There are therefore no measures they would not employ to defend it, and in normal circumstances there is nothing they would consent to place above it. Culturally well-formed communities, when they find themselves placed in a plural society exert themselves to carve out zones of autonomy, define the plural society in such a manner that it makes no demands on them in the cultural sphere, and carefully delimit areas requiring common actions. The communal mentality expresses itself in these, essentially defensive, exertions on the part of minorities. The majority, no less well defined and no less concerned with preservation and extension of its own culture, reacts negatively to the efforts of the minorities to place limits on its power, which it views, not incorrectly, as inimical to the growth of the nation. The minorities and the majority have radically different, sometimes incompatible, ideas about the form and substance of the nation.

In India partition had appeared to have resolved the communal problem through the drastic solution of creating a separate state for the Muslim majority areas. It was, however, not a complete solution to

the problem because the residual India still remained a pluralistic collectivity. While partition was the solution to one aspect of the problem, secular democracy was envisaged as the solution to the structural problem of plurality within the Indian Union. This still remains our best hope. But if we are ever to overcome this problem it would require pursuit of a well-conceived policy which takes into account the contradictory pulls and pressures in our public life but does not make damaging compromises with communal forces for short-term benefits, which protects minority rights but does not undermine the integrative process. The Hindu communalist ideology reflects a failure to grasp the nature of the communal problem; its hostility towards Muslims had hindered the integrative process and, if persisted in, could undermine the democratic state.

While communal violence raises larger issues of grave national importance, it also represents the straight forward law and order problem. The primary responsibility of providing security of life and property of all has not been satisfactorily discharged in the past two decades, and this failure has greatly aggravated the problem. The remedy does not lie in the communalisation of the administrative machinery but making administration more effective. The decommunalisation of politics is a task for the political leadership—here there is a need for greater responsibility

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF DISTRICTS AFFECTED BY COMMUNAL VIOLENCE, 1961-1970

State	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	Total No of Districts	Total No of Districts Affected
Andhra Pradesh	—	2	2	—	3	2	3	6	3	4	20	11
Assam	4	2	4	5	6	3	3	4	2	8	11	9
Bihar	11	4	9	12	9	11	14	15	16	14	17	17
Gujarat	2	3	4	7	5	3	1	2	14	5	17	16
Haryana	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	7	1
Jammu and Kashmir	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	9	1
Karnataka	2	1	2	2	4	2	2	4	4	6	19	14
Kerala	2	2	—	1	3	2	2	4	5	4	9	8
Madhya Pradesh	8	4	1	7	5	2	6	6	9	13	43	29
Maharashtra	4	5	3	10	13	11	7	9	12	17	26	25
Orissa	1	—	1	5	3	3	2	2	4	5	13	10
Punjab	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	11	1
Rajasthan	—	1	—	1	2	3	3	3	2	7	26	11
Tamil Nadu	2	1	1	5	2	2	2	2	3	4	14	11
Uttar Pradesh	13	11	6	9	12	9	10	14	9	16	54	31
West Bengal	10	9	5	11	8	5	7	5	10	8	16	15
Delhi	1	1	1	—	1	—	—	1	1	1	1	1
Manipur	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1
Arunachal Pradesh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1
Tripura	1	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	1
India	61	47	40	71	77	58	63	79	94	116	316	216

\* Treated here as a single administrative Unit.



TABLE 2: COMMUNAL VIOLENCE, 1961-1970 RURAL/URBAN DISTRIBUTION

State	1961		1962		1963		1964		1965		1966		1967		1968		1969		1970		Total	
	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U
Andhra Pradesh	—	—	1	4	1	6	—	—	15	34	—	54	—	528	4	77	—	—	13	2	22	737
Assam	9	1	4	3	31	11	15	4	8	6	9	1	9	6	27	3	8	2	37	20	157	59
Bihar	24	10	5	2	12	8	97	331	25	7	22	5	337	315	55	20	48	21	66	120	691	839
Gujarat	—	—	2	1	4	2	5	37	4	26	1	2	1	—	—	4	94	578	6	15	114	685
Haryana	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	1
Jammu & Kashmir	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	1	3
Karnataka	1	7	1	1	—	4	2	1	22	17	—	4	5	—	4	20	1	26	3	17	39	97
Kerala	3	—	6	—	—	—	3	—	4	—	4	—	1	1	6	—	8	1	4	4	39	6
Madhya Pradesh	53	180	5	6	—	—	1	9	12	3	4	2	15	1	19	14	7	148	11	38	91	437
Maharashtra	10	7	5	27	1	14	10	67	16	210	8	238	2	163	6	29	5	35	153	194	216	984
Orissa	—	2	—	—	—	2	252	440	1	6	6	4	—	2	2	4	6	2	2	57	269	560
Punjab	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
Rajasthan	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	42	—	4	—	6	—	—	8	5	9	5
Tamil Nadu	2	—	1	—	3	—	3	4	8	—	2	—	2	1	2	2	2	2	9	3	34	10
Uttar Pradesh	15	76	14	17	7	5	14	7	12	27	8	121	21	26	10	147	11	18	15	38	127	482
West Bengal	35	—	66	34	9	1	456	339	23	1	13	12	15	11	5	26	63	17	78	32	763	473
Delhi	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	5	—	15
Manipur	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	3	—
Arunachal Pradesh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	1	—
Tripura	4	—	1	—	—	—	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	6	—	14	2
India	153	286	110	101	68	70	872	1243	141	346	75	498	395	1076	122	353	253	873	403	526	2592	5372

TABLE 3: MUSLIM PROPORTION IN THE RURAL/URBAN POPULATION OF DISTRICTS (1961) AND THE NUMBER OF COMMUNAL INCIDENTS, 1961-1970 (In Per Cent)

Muslim Population States	5		5.01 to 10.00		10.01 to 15.00		15.01 to 20.00		20.01 to 30.00		30.01 and Above		Total No of Incidents		Total	
	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U
Andhra Pradesh	1	—	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Assam	7	2	7	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bihar	178	—	95	—	354	—	365	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gujarat	38	1	70	—	6	—	477	—	108	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Haryana	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Jammu & Kashmir	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Karnataka	20	—	12	—	7	—	67	—	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kerala	—	—	3	—	8	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Madhya Pradesh	71	—	20	126	213	—	—	—	66	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Maharashtra	124	—	79	223	3	—	116	—	409	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Orissa	269	—	441	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Punjab	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rajasthan	1	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tamil Nadu	34	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Uttar Pradesh	—	—	58	—	16	—	15	—	260	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Bengal	1	—	27	—	17	—	23	—	43	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Delhi	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arunachal Pradesh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tripura	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
India	746	48	396	833	411	1444	1055	1116	635	1562	288	438	2592	5372	7964	7964



an empty rhetoric. Nothing less than the future of the nation is at stake in the way the communal problem is handled in the years ahead.

## I Communal Violence in India "

### THE EXTENT

Although communal violence had become an endemic feature of Indian life before independence, it declined markedly after 1947. There are no adequate data on communal incidents between 1947 and 1954, but there is good ground for believing that there were not many of them. Such information as is available shows that for India, except Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, there were only 20 incidents in 1950 (11 of them in West Bengal), 7 in 1951, 12 in 1952 and 4 in 1953. Their numbers were not large for the subsequent decade. The great divide in the history of communal riots in India is 1964. This is borne out by the statistical compilation put together by the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. Whereas the total number of reported communal incidents over the period 1950-1963 was 1141, giving an average of 81.5 per year, in 1964 it had risen to 2115. Admittedly 1964 was a particularly bad year for communal violence, but there is no mistaking the fact that it represented a major change in the communal climate in the country. For the seven years between 1964 and 1970 the average number of incidents per year was 1025, as against 81.5 for the preceding fourteen years.

Not only had the number of incidents increased, but the area affected by com-

munal violence had steadily expanded. In 1961 there were 61 districts in the country which had experienced communal troubles in that year; by the end of the decade their number had gone up to 216, representing about 70 per cent of the basic administrative units. Again viewed as an administrative task, whereas in 1961, 61 district authorities had to contend with communal violence, by the end of the decade their number had risen to 116. The number of districts affected in the various states over the years are given in Table 1.

It is evident that progressively communal conflict has emerged as one of the major problems in most of the states and increasing administrative and political resources have to be applied to its containment.

There are three states with very low incidents of communal violence, namely Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, and Punjab. The primary factor accounting for it is the population composition of these states. In Haryana and Punjab Muslim population is small and consequently the potential for Hindu-Muslim conflict is much less. In Kashmir the situation is reversed—i.e., there the Hindu population is small and consequently less potential for Hindu-Muslim conflict. The situation in Jammu is rather different. Here the Hindus enjoy preponderance in the population. The communal situation in Jammu has deteriorated over the past 14 years.

From the territorial spread of communal violence we move to examine the actual incident of it in different states over the 1961-70 decade, subjecting the avail-

able data to detailed scrutiny with a view to determining the rural-urban distribution of incidents, the areas of repeated violence, the intensity of violence and identification of the riot-prone towns and districts. Table 2 gives statewide distribution of communal incidents for 1961-1970 period.

Communal violence occurs in areas of mixed population. There are fewer incidents in districts with small proportion of Muslim population; they also appear to correlate with the size of the Muslim population as a proportion of the urban population in several districts. While a precise relationship between communal incidents and the proportion of Muslim population in rural/urban areas cannot be established, available data do suggest a broad pattern: more riots occur in districts with Muslim population varying between 10 and 30 per cent and above. Table 3 supplies the details for all the states.

In the following pages a detailed statewide analysis of these data are presented, first for urban areas and then for rural areas.

### Andhra Pradesh

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	3	119
II	1	587
III	6	23
IV	2	3
V	1	5
VI	—	—
Total	13	737

TABLE 4: COMMUNAL VIOLENCE 1961-1970 CLASS OF TOWNS AND NO OF INCIDENTS\*

State	I		II		III		IV		V		VI		Total	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	Towns	Incident
Andhra Pradesh	3	119	1	587	6	23	2	3	1	5	—	—	13	737
Assam	2	2	1	4	5	37	2	3	4	4	4	7	18	57
Bihar	9	609	4	17	10	184	8	20	3	8	1	—	35	839
Gujarat	3	420	10	139	13	77	14	40	5	9	—	—	45	685
Karnataka	4	12	3	9	5	25	4	45	3	1	1	—	20	97
Kerala	2	4	—	—	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	3	6
Madhya Pradesh	11	281	4	29	13	72	5	38	8	17	—	—	41	437
Maharashtra	14	484	7	87	11	320	12	83	5	10	—	—	49	984
Orissa	1	14	2	388	3	20	7	41	2	6	—	—	15	469
Rajasthan	4	66	1	1	3	4	3	4	—	—	—	—	11	75
Tamil Nadu	1	4	1	2	3	3	1	1	—	—	—	—	6	10
Uttar Pradesh	14	311	8	12	10	115	5	40	2	4	—	—	39	482
West Bengal	9	235	15	174	13	60	3	4	—	—	—	—	40	473
Delhi	1	15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	15
	78	2576	57	1449	96	941	67	323	35	68	6	9	336	5766

Notes: 1 No of towns.

2 No of incidents.

\* Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Tripura are excluded from the Table. They reported four incidents between them over the decade, spread over four towns (2 class V and 2 class VI).



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(1) Towns with persistent violence: Hyderabad experienced riots in 8 out of 10 years. The 1958 riots were serious, lasting for as long as 36 days. 1967 for 9 days, 1970 for 11 days, and Nizamabad town experienced riots successively for three years, 1965, 1966, 1967, lasting for 4, 4 and 6 days respectively. The number of incidents was unusually large in 1967; 510 spread over 6 days. Of the total 100 days of communal violence in the state, spread over 10 years, Hyderabad accounted for 65 and Nizamabad for 14, and the rest 21 days by the remaining 11 towns, giving the average duration of riots less than two days per town over a ten-year period.

(2) The number of incidents may be similarly analysed. Of the total 737 incidents reported, Hyderabad accounted for 113 and Nizamabad 587, leaving 35 incidents to the remaining 11 towns, averaging 3.2 incidents per town over a ten year period.

(3) The Rural-Urban distribution of incidents: 737 urban, 22 rural.

(4) Hyderabad emerges as the single major centre of communal trouble in Andhra Pradesh. Hyderabad has been a centre of communal politics. It has a large Muslim population, a part of which has experienced reverse social mobility. There was a considerable Arya Samaj activity in the city over a long period. In recent years the growth of communal organisations have contributed to the accentuation of communal tension in the city.

## Assam

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	2	2
II	1	4
III	5	37
IV	2	3
V	4	4
VI	4	7
Total	18	57

(1) The district capital Silchar shows incidents more persistently: in 5 out of 10 years, Silchar, Dhubri and Karimganj, all class III towns, recorded 12, 11 and 9 incidents over the decade, leaving 25 incidents distributed over the remaining 15 towns. The class I towns, namely Gauhati and Shillong, recorded only 1 incident each throughout the decade—Gauhati in 1965 and Shillong in 1970. In both cases the trouble lasted for only one day.

TABLE 5: CAUSES OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

	No of Incidents	Percentage
Festivity/celebrations	225	26.75
Private property disputes	162	19.26
Quarrels over women	142	16.89
Personal transactions, enmities etc.	139	16.53
Cow slaughter	121	14.39
Desecration of religious places	34	4.04
Disputes over graveyards	18	2.14
Total	841	100.00

TABLE 6: CAUSES OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE, 1961-1970

State	Cow Slaughter	Desecration of Religious Places	Festivity/Celebrations	Graveyards	Total	Chain Incidents
Andhra Pradesh	—	1	21	1	23	680
Assam	7	1	11	—	19	106
Bihar	56	4	64	8	132	1199
Gujarat	6	2	6	—	14	724
Haryana	—	—	—	—	—	2
Karnataka	1	1	8	2	12	100
Kerala	—	1	4	1	6	9
Madhya Pradesh	6	—	11	—	17	429
Maharashtra	8	18	35	2	63	699
Orissa	5	—	9	—	14	1
Punjab	—	—	—	—	—	4
Rajasthan	—	—	4	—	4	17
Tamil Nadu	—	1	5	1	7	425
Uttar Pradesh	17	4	27	3	51	1040
West Bengal	15	1	17	—	53	—
Delhi	—	—	2	—	2	—
Arunachal Pradesh	—	—	1	—	1	11
Tripura	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note: Jammu and Kashmir and Manipur have had none of these types of incidents and are, therefore, excluded from this table.

(2) Of the 42 days of communal riots in the state, Silchar, Karimganj and Dhubri accounted for 21 days, leaving 21 days of rioting in the remaining 15 centres. Of these another class III town, Tinsukia, experienced two riots of two days duration each.

(3) The main towns of communal trouble seem to be three, possibly four (all of them class III): Silchar, Karimganj, Dhubri and Tinsukia.

(4) In Assam the incidents of communal violence is much greater in rural than in urban areas: 157 against 57 incidents.

## Bihar

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	9	609
II	4	17
III	10	184
IV	20	20
V	8	8
VI	1	1
Total	35	839

(1) Of the 839 incidents, 84 per cent are accounted for by two industrial centres—Ranchi and Jamshedpur and its adjacent areas Chaibasa and Chakradharpur.

(2) Ranchi and Bihar Sharif have had recurring riots: in 7 out of ten years in Ranchi and 6 out of ten years in Bihar Sharif. Jamshedpur-Chaibasa area had riots in 5 out of ten years.

(3) Of the 171 days of rioting, Ranchi accounted for 33, Bihar Sharif 10, and Jamshedpur 28; Chaibasa and Chakradharpur accounted for 8 and 18 days respectively. Thus the three centres of riots accounted for 97 out of 171 days, i.e. about 57 per cent. Bhagalpur appears to be another centre of rioting: it experienced riots in 3 out of 10 years, and in 1967 had 9 days of rioting. The worst years for riots were 1964, 1967 and 1970, which accounted for 766 of the 839 incidents, and 117 of the 171 days of rioting. In Bihar class I towns are the worst affected.

(4) There were a large number of incidents in rural areas in this state—691 over the 1961-1970 decade.

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	3	420
II	10	139
III	13	77
IV	14	40
V	5	9
VI	—	—
Total	45	685



(1) Most of the riots in Gujarat took place in 1969. Of the total 685 incidents over the ten-year period 578 took place in that single year. Only two towns, namely Ahmedabad and Godhra, show a recurring pattern. During the decade Ahmedabad had riots in 6 years, and Godhra in five years.

(2) Of the 152 days of riots 98 were during 1969, and Ahmedabad, Baroda and Godhra accounted for 59 of the total number of days (i.e., about 40 per cent of the total). The remaining 42 towns experienced communal violence of varying duration, totalling 93 days over the decade. Even in Ahmedabad the duration of riots was not more than two or three days before 1969.

(3) Communal disturbances in Gujarat have been mainly in urban areas. The state capital Ahmedabad has had an old legacy of communal trouble, going back to 1714. In the decade under review the urban areas accounted for 685 incidents, while the rural areas accounted for 114 incidents.

#### Haryana

The state experienced a communal riot only once, during 1965, at Nuh (VI class) in Gurgaon district. There was only one incident and it lasted only for one day.

TABLE 7: RURAL/URBAN DISTRIBUTION OF CAUSES OF COMMUNAL INCIDENTS

	Rural	Urban
Cow slaughter	88	33
Festivity/celebrations	104	121
Desecration of religious places	16	18
Graveyards	11	7
Total	219	179

TABLE 8: STATEWISE DISTRIBUTION OF CAUSES OF COMMUNAL INCIDENTS

States	Cow Slaughter		Festivity		Religious Places		Graveyards		Total
	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	
Andhra Pradesh	1	4	—	21	—	1	—	1	28
Assam	4	3	4	7	1	—	—	—	19
Bihar	44	12	48	16	3	1	6	2	132
Gujarat	3	3	5	1	2	—	—	—	14
Karnataka	1	—	3	5	1	—	1	1	12
Kerala	—	—	4	—	1	—	1	—	6
Madhya Pradesh	3	3	2	9	—	—	—	—	14
Maharashtra	—	8	7	28	4	14	1	1	63
Orissa	4	1	2	7	—	—	—	—	14
Rajasthan	—	—	1	3	—	—	—	—	4
Tamil Nadu	—	—	4	1	1	—	1	—	7
Uttar Pradesh	14	3	11	16	2	2	1	2	51
West Bengal	15	—	13	4	1	—	—	—	33
Delhi	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	2
India	83	33	104	121	16	18	11	7	398

The place affected was a class VI town.

#### Jammu and Kashmir

The J and K experienced a communal riot of 1 day's duration in 1970. The affected town Kistwar (in Doder district) is a class VI town.

#### Karnataka

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	4	12
II	3	9
III	5	25
IV	4	45
V	3	5
VI	1	1
Total	20	97

(1) There were no places except one, Bidar, which experienced repeated rioting in Karnataka. Bidar had riots in four out of ten years under review.

(2) The number of days of rioting for the decade was 33, and the worst year of rioting was 1970 when six towns had riots; in 1968 there were five.

(3) The number of incidents in the rural areas was 39 for the decade.

#### Kerala

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	2	4
II	—	—
III	1	1
IV	1	1
V	—	—
VI	—	—
Total	4	6

(1) Throughout the decade Kerala experienced communal rioting only in four places, and each had only one riot. Of the six incidents 3 occurred in Trivandrum, and of the 5 days of rioting Trivandrum accounted for two.

(2) There were many more rural incidents than urban: 39 as against 6 in the towns.

#### Madhya Pradesh

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	11	281
II	4	29
III	13	72
IV	5	38
V	8	17
VI	—	—
Total	41	437

(1) 328 of the 437 incidents took place in two years, viz. in 1961 (180) and 1970 (148).

(2) Indore had riots in four out of ten years, but every year beginning 1967. Jabalpur had riots in three out of ten years, and so did Bhopal and Satna. Vidisha had riots in four out of ten years.

(3) Of the 119 days of riots, Indore accounted for 25, Jabalpur 14, Bhopal 6 and Vidisha 5, leaving 69 days to 37 towns.

(4) Indore is the prime centre of communal violence in Madhya Pradesh. For it 1969 was the worst year, with 114 incidents spread over 11 days.

#### Maharashtra

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	14	484
II	7	37
III	11	320
IV	12	83
V	5	10
VI	—	—
Total	49	934

(1) The worst year for communal violence in Maharashtra was 1970, when the state experienced 85 days of rioting, out of the total of 193 days for the decade. 22 towns had communal riots in 1970, as against 19 in 1968, and 16 in 1966, the previous peak year.

(2) The towns experiencing repeated rioting were: Greater Bombay, Poona, Sholapur, Malkapur, Aurangabad, Ahmednagar, Akola, Bhiwandi and Malegaon. The first four of these had communal riots in five out of the ten years, while the remaining ones had them



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for four years out of ten.

(3) Bhiwandi, Poona, Aurangabad, Thana, and Greater Bombay experienced intense form of rioting in 1970. Bhiwandi had 20 days of rioting in that year, Poona had 10 days, Thana 13 days, Aurangabad 8 days and Greater Bombay 6 days—altogether 57 days out of the total of 85 days of rioting during that year. Washim in Akola district and Malegaon in Nasik district are two other towns which experienced communal rioting of same scale in 1966 and 1967 respectively. Poona had its worst riots in 1965 when 201 incidents occurred over 6 days.

(4) There was substantial communal violence in rural areas of Maharashtra, accounting for a little over one-sixth of all the incidents over the decade.

**Orissa**

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	1	14
II	2	338
III	3	20
IV	7	41
V	2	6
VI	—	—
Total	15	469

(1) In Orissa the main incidents of communal violence occurred in 1964. In that year riots took place in 11 of the 15 towns in which riots have occurred during the 1961-70 decade.

(2) There is only one town—Cuttack—with a recurring cycle of communal violence. Here riots have taken place in six out of ten years.

(3) Of the 62 days of rioting, Rourkela accounted for 17 (15 in 1964, 2 in 1970), and Cuttack 13, leaving 32 days for 13 other towns, averaging two and a half days of rioting over a ten year period.

(4) There was a large number of communal incidents in rural areas during the decade—264 were reported. They were mostly part of the 1964 outbreak.

**Rajasthan**

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	4	66
II	1	1
III	3	4
IV	3	4
V	—	—
VI	—	—
Total	11	75

(1) The main centres of communal violence in Rajasthan were the cities of

Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur. They all experienced rioting in four out of ten years. Udaipur had its worst riot in 1966 when 40 incidents took place in two days of rioting.

(2) The three cities accounted for 19 days of rioting, leaving 12 days of it to the remaining 8 towns, thus averaging for them one and a half day's rioting for each over the decade.

(3) The incidents of communal violence in the rural areas of the state was negligible.

**Tamil Nadu**

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	1	4
II	1	2
III	3	3
IV	1	1
Total	6	10

(1) The decade recorded very few communal incidents in the state. No town, except Madras, had more than one riot over the period; and even Madras had only two of them, in 1964, and in 1969.

(2) No riot lasted beyond one day.

(3) There were 34 rural incidents, 3.4 times more than the urban ones.

**Uttar Pradesh**

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	14	311
II	8	12
III	10	115
IV	5	40
V	2	4
Total	39	482

(1) 14 class I towns account for 311 incidents out of the total of 482 for the decade. Of these 310, Allahabad, Meerut and Aligarh account for 208, i.e., over 67 per cent.

(2) Aligarh and Meerut have had riots in 7 out of the ten years under review. Moradabad has had riots for eight out of ten years. Agra and Bareilly had them for 6 out of ten years, and Allahabad and Varanasi had them for 5 years.

(3) Of the 179 riot days, Allahabad accounted for 32, Meerut 25, Aligarh 20, Moradabad 19, Agra, Bareilly and Varanasi 11 each—altogether 129, representing just over 75 per cent of the total, leaving 50 days to 32 towns for the whole decade.

(4) The number of rural incidents were relatively few, 127 out of the total of 609.

**West Bengal**

Town Classes	No of Towns	No of Incidents
I	9	218
II	15	176
III	13	60
IV	3	4
Total	40	473

(1) The major outbreak of communal violence in West Bengal was in 1964: 339 of the 473 incidents occurred in that one year in 32 towns, most of which have had no riot afterwards in the decade under review.

(2) Calcutta city has suffered communal violence on a modest scale every year since 1964.

(3) Of the 150 days of rioting, 86 were in 1964, and Calcutta accounted for 30 more in the subsequent years of the decade.

(4) The rural incidents of communal violence were very substantial, accounting for over 60 per cent of all the incidents.

**Delhi**

Delhi experienced communal incidents every year during the decade except in 1964, 1966 and 1967. The total number of incidents were 15, resulting in 15 days of communal violence for the decade.

**Tripura**

Tripura reported two incidents in 1968, resulting in two days of violence.

From the analysis of the data on communal violence available to us, it would appear that the following urban centres are prone to periodic rioting:

1 Andhra Pradesh	Hyderabad
	Nizamabad
2 Assam	Silchar
	Dhubri
	Karimganj
	Tinsukia
3 Bihar	Bhagalpur
	Biher Sharif
	Jamshedpur
	(with Chaibasa)
	Ranchi
4 Gujarat	Ahmedabad
	Godhra
	Baroda
5 Madhya Pradesh	Indore
	Jabalpur
	Bhopal
	Vidisha
6 Maharashtra	Bombay
	Poona
	Sholapur
	Malkapur
	Aurangabad
	Ahmednagar
	Akola



7 Rajasthan	Bhiwandi Malegaon Jaipur Jodhpur Udaipur
8 Uttar Pradesh	Agra Allahabad Meerut Aligarh Varanasi Bareilly Moradabad
9 West Bengal	Calcutta
10 Delhi	Delhi

Table 4 presents in a summary form the data on all the 335 towns which together recorded 5766 communal incidents over the 1961-1970 decade:

While the average number of incidents per town affected is a little over 17 for the decade, it is 33 for class I towns, 25.4 for class II towns, 9.80 for class III towns, 4.32 for class IV towns, 1.94 for class V towns, and 1.5 for class VI towns.

Taking the 1971 town classification, we find that 10.77 per cent of all the towns in the country had experienced communal violence. The percentage figures for different classes of towns were: I: 15 per cent; II: 25.45 per cent; III: 15.33 per cent; IV: 7.71 per cent; V: 5.13 per cent; VI: 3.37 per cent.

The pattern of violence in rural areas:

(1) *Andhra Pradesh*: Of the 22 rural incidents reported, 14 occurred in Nizamabad district in 1965. Medak reported 3 rural incidents in 1968.

(2) *Assam*: Of the 157 rural incidents, 88 were reported from Cachar, 31 from Goalpara and 11 from Kamrup. 1963, 1968 and 1970 accounted for 95 of the 157 incidents.

(3) *Bihar*: Of the 691 incidents, Muzaffarpur accounted for 245, Ranchi 107, and Singhbhum 62, a total of 414, about 60 per cent. Of these 304 took place in Muzaffarpur and Ranchi in 1967, and 60 in Singhbhum in 1964.

(4) *Gujarat*: Of the 114 rural incidents reported, 94 took place in 1969; 45 in Kaira, 16 in Mehsana, 9 in Baroda.

(5) *Karnataka*: Of the 39 reported incidents, 16 took place in Mandya in 1965. The rest were spread over the remaining 13 districts over the decade.

TABLE 9: RURAL/URBAN DISTRIBUTION OF PRIVATE CAUSES OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

Issues	Rural	Urban
Women	65	77
Private property	134	28
Personal transactions etc.	55	84
Total	254 (57.33) per cent	189 (42.67) per cent

(6) *Kerala*: Of the 39 reported incidents, 11 took place in Kozhikode, which experienced communal rioting in 6 out of ten years of the 1961-70 decade, the rest were scattered over the remaining 7 districts.

(7) *Madhya Pradesh*: Of the 91 reported incidents, Sagar accounted for 25 and Jabalpur for 20. They took place in 1961.

(8) *Maharashtra*: Of the 216 incidents, 104 took place in Thana, and of these 131 occurred in 1970; 38 in Kolaba (34 in 1970); 10 in Greater Bombay (all in 1970); a total of 152 (of which 145 in one year, 1970), representing 70 per cent of the cases.

(9) *Orissa*: Of the 269 incidents, 223 took place in Sundargarh and 21 in Sambalpur in 1964, which represents over 83 per cent of the cases.

(10) *Tamil Nadu*: Of the 34 incidents 9 were reported from Tiruchimpalli, which experienced communal riots in 4 out of ten years of the 1961-1970 decade.

(11) *Uttar Pradesh*: Of the 127 incidents reported, 20 were from Gorakhpur, 17 from Allahabad, 10 from Bareilly, and 9 from Meerut.

Allahabad reported riots in rural areas in six years of the 1961-70 decade, Gorakhpur four, and Meerut five.

(12) *West Bengal*: Of the 763 reported rural incidents, 395 were from 24 Parganas, 138 from Nadia, 63 from Murshidabad, 53 from Cooch Behar, 23 from Malda, 20 from West Dirajpur. Of the 763 incidents, 456 took place in 1964, and 424 of them in two districts, 24 parganas and Nadia.

There are 30 districts in the country which can be identified as being prone to communal violence in rural areas:

Andhra Pradesh	: Nizamabad, Medak
Assam	: Cachar, Goalpara, Kamrup
Bihar	: Muzaffarpur, Ranchi, Singhbhum
Gujarat	: Kaira, Mehsana, Baroda
Karnataka	: Mandya
Madhya Pradesh	: Sagar, Jabalpur
Maharashtra	: Thana, Kolaba, Greater Bombay
Orissa	: Sundargarh, Sambalpur
Tamil Nadu	: Tiruchirapalli
Uttar Pradesh	: Gorakhpur, Allahabad, Bareilly, Meerut
West Bengal	: 24 Parganas, Nalda, Malda, West Dirajpur, Murshidabad, Cooch Behar

## CAUSES OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

It is a general finding of nearly all the enquiries into communal riots that their immediate causes tend to be almost always trivial. The remarkable feature of communal incidents is, however, not that they begin with trivial friction, but that once begun they acquire a collective aspect. The riots in Delhi in 1973 and 1974 started over petty personal quarrels, but soon developed into group conflict, leading to much loss of life and property and increased communal hostility. The major riots of the 1960s had insignificant beginnings. Of the 841 incidents over the 1961-70 period whose causes have been identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the details are given in Table 5.

A little over half of the total number of disputes relate to private causes (52.66 per cent), while the rest relate to religious/public causes. The largest category of incidents, 6815 out of 7964, representing 81.80 per cent of the total, are identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs as 'chain incidents', i.e., have no independent cause/s, but result from some major outbreak and are in the nature of a spillover. Almost three quarters of these 'spillover' incidents occurred in four years, viz. 1964, 1967, 1969 and 1970, and were related to the wave of violence that swept eastern India in 1964, Bihar in 1967, and Gujarat and Maharashtra in 1969 and 1970 respectively. These together accounted for 54 per cent of the 'chain incidents' of the decade. The state-wise distribution of incidents by identified public causes is given in Table 6.

(1) Bihar leads in having the higher number of public causes for communal violence, and is followed by Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Between them these four states account for over 70 per cent of the cases.

(2) The cow slaughter question is important in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

(3) The incidents of desecration of religious places is most important in Maharashtra, and to a small extent in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

(4) The graveyards issue is of importance in Bihar, and to a lesser extent in Uttar Pradesh.

(5) The festivity/celebration occasions have occasioned communal violence in all the states save Punjab, Haryana and Tripura (also in Jammu and Kashmir, and Manipur).

(6) Here too Bihar takes the lead, followed by Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. Between them these five states account for 22.88 per cent of the cases of communal



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violence on this score.

The rural-urban distribution of these incidents shows that 55 per cent of them occurred in rural areas. The rural/urban and state-wise distribution is provided in Tables 7 and 8.

(1) As is to be expected in predominantly rural Bihar, there are more incidents on every count in the rural areas there as compared with the urban areas. This is especially so with regard to cow slaughter. This issue is also important in rural Uttar Pradesh and rural West Bengal. In Maharashtra, on the other hand, it has been an entirely urban problem.

(2) Festivities/celebrations give rise to communal incidents in rural areas in every state except Andhra Pradesh and Delhi, and in urban areas in all states except Kerala. In rural incidents of violence on account of festivity Bihar takes the lead, followed by West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, while in urban disturbances on this count Maharashtra takes the lead, followed by Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

(3) The largest number of incidents of desecration of religious places was reported from Maharashtra, where they were recorded in seven out of ten years under review. Here they were predominantly in urban areas.

(4) Incidents related to graveyards occurred mainly in rural Bihar.

The identified private causes of communal violence related to women, private property and personal transactions, feuds etc. Over the 1961-70 decade these together numbered 443. Their distribution for rural and urban areas is given in Table 9.

It should cause no surprise that more communal incidents occur in rural areas than in urban areas given that almost 4/5th of the Indian population still lived in the rural areas in 1961.

The proportions between rural and urban incidents alter dramatically when we come to the 'chain incidents'. Here the rural areas account for only 28.77 per cent of the total number of such incidents reported for the 1961-70 decade. Riots in rural areas are sporadic and generally do not spread.

Our understanding of the 'causes' of communal violence can now be deepened somewhat with the help of the findings of the various Commissions of Enquiry that have reported on some of the major riots. There are six reports of the Raghobar Dayal Commission reporting on six riots that took place between August and October 1967, the Reddy Commission's report on the Gujarat riots in 1959, the D P Madon Commission's

report on the Maharashtra (Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad) riots of 1970, the Tandon and Prasad reports on riots in Delhi in 1973 and 1974, and the Jitendra Narain Commission's report on the Jamshedpur disturbances of April 1979. I have not been able to consult the report on the Tellicherry (Kerala) riots of 1970.

Among the general causes of riots these commissions mention are a history of communal conflict which creates a recurring cycle of confrontation between communities. These confrontations result in violence on some provocation or the other. The immediate factor in such a case is not the 'cause' of communal violence but only an occasion. The true, deeper, causes lie elsewhere. Among these deeper causes thus identified are: (1) partition of India and the resulting hostility of Hindus towards Muslims; (2) the activities of communal organisations and political parties; (3) religious disputes arising from cow slaughter, music before mosques, desecration of religious places (temples, mosques, graves), possession of graveyards; (4) affront to women; and (5) conversion activity.

In their report on the Ranchi-Hatia riot of August 22-29, 1967, the Raghobar Dayal Commission reported that the riot was preceded by several incidents causing communal animosity; the overall political situation in the state (Bihar) had become unstable in the aftermath of the general election of that year; the communal organisations, especially the RSS and Jan Sangh, had been active in the area and had by their activities poisoned inter-community relations; and, the Muslim demand for the recognition of Urdu as the second official language of the state was

greatly resented by the Hindus. This last was the immediate cause of a protest procession which sparked off the communal riot.

The disturbances in Jainpur and Suchepur in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh on September 24-25, 1967 centred around the question of ownership of a piece of land claimed by Muslims to be their graveyard and by Hindus as their cremation ground.

In Sursand (district Muzaffarpur, Bihar) the disturbances of October 13-15 1967 were sparked off by the controversy over the route of the Durga procession. The village had received full impact of communal tension over several years and had entered even into the cultural programmes organised during the Vijayadashami festival.

Disturbances in Sholapur (Maharashtra) on September 17, 1967 started during the passage of the Ganapathi procession. Sholapur has a long history of communal conflict, going back at least to 1925. Sectarian religious organisations and communal political parties have been active in the town for several years.

The Ahmednagar (Maharashtra) riot of September 18, 1967 was occasioned by the disfigurement of idols in a local temple. Ahmednagar too has a long history of communal conflict. The Pakistan factor has also operated in the local inter-community relations. Communal organisations have been active.

Malegaon (Maharashtra) also has a long history of communal conflict. The riot on September 24, 1967 was focused on a case of cow slaughter. Molestation of women, music before mosques, cow slaughter have agitated the town popula-

TABLE 10: COMMUNAL VIOLENCE—ARRESTS, 1961-1970

State	Hindus	Muslims	Not-known	Total
Andhra Pradesh	256	166	315	727
Assam	331	398	899	1628
Bihar	2005	1560	2076	5641
Gujarat	122	241	6713	7076
Haryana	—	4	—	4
Jammu and Kashmir	9	7	—	16
Karnataka	11	29	580	620
Kerala	47	9	31	87
Madhya Pradesh	3266	1292	1216	5774
Maharashtra	334	356	9591	10281
Orissa	26	39	1013	1078
Rajasthan	24	71	266	361
Tamil Nadu	58	75	15	148
Uttar Pradesh	1375	1797	2801	5973
West Bengal	2756	618	17567	20941
Delhi	31	34	16	81
Arunachal Pradesh	—	—	4	4
Tripura	17	—	42	59
India	10668	6696	43145	60509



TABLE 11: CASUALTIES 1961-1970 (KILLED AND INJURED)

State	1961		1962		1963		1964		1965		1966		1967		1968		1969		1970		Total	
	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I
Andhra Pradesh	2	24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Assam	6	86	1	24	1	96	1	18	5	92	1	8	43	10	98	2	14	7	34	196	610	1670
Bihar	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gujarat	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Haryana	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Jammu & Kashmir	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Karnataka	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kerala	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Madhya Pradesh	85	205	31	3	53	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Maharashtra	1	65	5	61	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Orissa	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Punjab	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rajasthan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tamil Nadu	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Uttar Pradesh	40	185	10	56	2	31	6	26	8	94	3	62	23	247	42	380	14	309	8	69	156	1493
West Bengal	5	90	21	114	3	53	349	60	2	29	3	78	8	158	4	69	49	213	12	153	456	1915
Delhi	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Manipur	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arunachal Pradesh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tripura	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
India	139	755	42	395	30	569	1703	2110	30	870	42	588	253	1308	87	1377	572	2507	297	1676	3195	12155



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tion at least since 1922. Communal organisations have been active.

The Ahmedabad riot of September 18, 1969, which spread to several other areas in Gujarat, took place over the alleged attack on the Sadhus of a local temple by a group of Muslims. Although there have been communal riots of Ahmedabad before, the city had no entrenched tradition of communal conflict. The tension was building up over the preceding three or four years, especially in the aftermath of the 1965 India-Pakistan war. Communal organisations were active in the city.

In Bhiwandi (Maharashtra) the May 1970 disturbances occurred on the occasion of the Shiva-Jayanti celebrations. The town had become a victim of communal politics since 1963, largely as a result of the activities of communal political organisations.

The riots in Delhi in 1973 and in 1974 had entirely private origins, but the area in which the disturbances occurred has had a history of communal conflict going back to 1924. Communal organisations have been active in the area for several years.

The Jamshedpur disturbances of April 1979 arose over the Ram Navami procession route. The city has experienced communal conflict since 1964. Communal organisations have been active, especially with the *akhadas*.

In recent years two further causes of communal conflict have emerged, namely conversion and economic competition. Conversions have been an explosive issue in India since the mid 1920s. For several decades it had lain dormant because there was no large scale conversion activity. Its re-emergence is owed to the reported mass conversions of Harijans to Islam in Tamil Nadu in 1981.

Economic competition as an underlying cause of communal conflict is being frequently mentioned in some recent writing on the subject, and the cases cited are those of riots in Aligarh, Moradabad, Bihar Sharif, and Udaipur. Of these only the last case had been carefully researched by Zerah Banu and her data demonstrate that the riots of 1965-66 had a devastating impact on the Bohra businesses in the city.<sup>13</sup>

All the inquiry commissions have re-

jected pre-planning as a cause in any of the riots they investigated.

#### THE PARTICIPANTS

It is difficult to determine who participates in the disturbances. Communal disturbances entail both group activity as well as individual acts. Group activity is demonstrative while individual acts pertain to arson, stabbing or use of fire arms against the adversaries. The various inquiry commissions, to whose reports reference has been made above, speak of riotous crowds of 100 to 10,000 or more. The figures of those arrested by the state authorities in the course of controlling riot situations, either before, during or immediately after a riot, provide a very poor guide to the scale of participation and no guide at all to the social background of the participants. The inquiry commissions' reports are also of little help here. But it is obvious that in Ranchi and Jamshedpur, Ahmedabad, Bhiwandi, Malegaon, Sholapur, the participants were mainly industrial workers; there was some student participation in Ranchi and Ahmedabad riots. In Sursand (Muzaffarpur District, Bihar) and in Jainpur and Suchetpur (Gorakhpur district, Uttar Pradesh) the participants were agriculturists. In Delhi they were factory workers, petty traders, and local gundas. In all urban riots the gunda element is strongly represented.

The available data on arrests, (see Table 10), though of only limited value, throw some light on the scale of comparative participation in riots in different states by different communities (in this case Hindus and Muslims). Unfortunately the 'not-known' category is too large (71.30 per cent of the total).

Among the participants we ought to include those communal organisations and political parties which have been active on behalf of communal causes, for their activity certainly contributes to the development of a climate of conflict, and in the course of actual disturbances their workers and sympathisers must be presumed not to be passive spectators of events.

For the Hindus the various inquiry commissions have identified the RSS, the erstwhile Jan Sangh, and the Bombay-based Shiva Sena as of prime importance. There are also local organisations, such

as the Rashtriya Utsav Mandal in Bhiwandi, an organisation dominated by the RSS and Jan Sangh elements which played a critical role in the communal disturbances of May 1970. For the Muslims these organisations include Majlis Tamir-e-Millat, Muslim Majlis, Majlis-e-Musawwarah, Indian Union Muslim League and the Jamt-e-Islami. There are also local Muslim organisations which surfaced during riots.

It is now conceded on all sides that non-communal political parties also make their contribution to the aggravation of communal climate in the country. They do this by paying close attention to the communal factor in their electoral calculations and by submitting to communal pressures in order to secure group support in elections.

The communal parties are engaged in continuous activity that promotes tension. Religious celebrations provide frequent occasions for expression of communal hostility, and in this, on available evidence, Hindu communal elements seem to be more active than the Muslim communal elements.

A section of the intelligentsia makes its own contribution through production of communal literature. It has not been possible to estimate the number of newspapers, especially weeklies in local languages, and other publications which promoted communal hostilities, but their influence must be substantial. This will require a careful investigation.

#### THE COST

The human, material, and spiritual cost of communal violence is very high. Its cost to the nation in terms of negative impact on national integration is even greater.

The data available to us enable us to consider the human cost in terms of casualties, and, somewhat less adequately, the damage of property. For the decade 1961-70 communal riot caused 3195 deaths and injuries to 12,155 persons. The details for the different states are given in Table 11. 5022 of the 7964 incidents involved damage of property. Among the places attacked were religious shrines, markets, factories, and private dwellings. There are no estimates of losses suffered in these attacks for the country as a whole, but the

TABLE 12: COMMUNAL INCIDENTS AND CASUALITIES (Killed and Injured) 1961-70 AND 1971-80

Decade	No of Incidents	Casualties Total	Killed				Injured			
			Hindus	Muslims	Not Known	Police	Hindus	Muslims	Not Known	Police
1961-70	7964	K 3195	282	2397	515	1	4134	5133	1833	995
		I 12155								
1971-80	2572	K1185	373	766	33	13	6674	5683	1072	1772



inquiry commissions provide details for the cases they investigated, and these must suffice as illustrations for our purpose.

One of the distressing aspects of casualties in communal violence is the marked preponderance of Muslims killed and injured. Among those identified by religion, numbering 2679 killed and 9272 injured, 2397 among the killed and 5138 among the injured were Muslims. A scrutiny of the data shows that in all states save Haryana, Karnataka, Punjab and Tamil Nadu more Muslims were killed than Hindus; among the injured Muslims preponderated in all states except Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Delhi. To a student of communal violence communal proportions among the killed and the injured can hold no intrinsic interest, but the disparity between the two communities in this horrible count exerts profound negative influence on the community which suffers a comparatively larger loss of life and hence this aspect of the data needs to be seriously noted.

The available data disclose a similar tale regarding damage of property. Of the 3167 incidents identified as involving damage to property, 2609 resulted in damage to the properties of Muslims, 558 resulted in damage to the properties of Hindus, and 14 to the properties of both.

For the extent of damage suffered by the Hindus and the Muslims we have to turn to the reports of the inquiry commissions. The incidents they investigated could in no sense be considered representative, but the data have an illustrative value and convey something of the magnitude of the losses suffered by the affected communities. The details are presented in the following paragraphs:

(1) *Ranchi-Hatia* (1967): The estimated total losses came to Rs 14,20,000. 78 houses and 65 shops were affected by arson, 195 houses and 123 shops and businesses were affected by looting or damage. The Raghubar Dayal Commission's report on this riot does not give a community-wise breakup of the estimated losses, but if one is to go by the rehabilitation grants made by the Government of Bihar to the victims, it would suggest that Muslims' losses were perhaps 9/10th of the estimated total.

(2) *Sholapur* (1967): 16 properties were damaged. The losses suffered by the owners, all Muslims, were relatively small, aggregating to a sum of Rs 15,427.

(3) *Ahmednagar* (1967): The Raghubar Dayal Commission report on this riot noted that 'Damage to property was fairly heavy', but provided no estimate of actual losses suffered by the victims. The claims for compensation made by 46 persons (Muslims 42, Hindus

4) came to Rs 137,000. Of this the Hindu claims came to Rs 6,875, and Muslim claims to Rs 1,30,125.

(4) *Malegaon* (1967): According to government reports 21 shops belonging to Hindus were burnt and 57 were damaged or looted; 22 shops belonging to Muslims were burnt and 22 were looted or damaged. Damage to the property of Hindus was estimated at Rs 8,21,153, and of Muslims at Rs 6,51,500.

(5) *Jainpur-Suchetpur* (1967): The Raghubar Dayal Commission report notes that there were 11 cases of looting in various villages during the course of the riots. No estimates of the losses suffered by the victims is provided.

(6) *Sursand* (1967): Almost the entire Muslim population of the village was rendered homeless on account of the riot. The total number of houses burnt was 214, out of which 205 were of Muslims, and 9 were of Hindus. The total damage suffered by the Muslims was estimated to be Rs 1,06,906.

(7) *Bhiwandi* (1970): The losses suffered by the Hindus and the Muslims, according to the estimates made by the District Police, were Rs 70,39,560 and Rs 82,80,603 respectively. In the damage suffered by industry and trade, amounting to Rs 89,79,202, of which the Hindu losses accounted for Rs 46,63,653 and Muslim losses for Rs 43,15,549.

(8) *Jalgaon* (1970): 386 properties (6 Hindu owned, 380 Muslim owned) were completely or partially burnt, or damaged otherwise, or looted. The estimated loss was Rs 34,74,722, of which the Muslims' share came to Rs 33,90,997, and the Hindus' to Rs 83,725.

(9) *Mahad* (1970): Here the total loss on account of arson, looting and other damage to property came to Rs 300,063, of which the Muslims' share was Rs 282,493, and the Hindus' Rs 17,570.

(10) *Ahmedabad* (1969): According to the information supplied by the state government to the Reddy Commission, the total number of houses, godowns, factories, huts burnt was 4799, and the total number of such properties burnt with kits taken out and burnt was 1943, which together comes to 6742. Out of the 4799 properties, the number of Hindu properties was 573, and of Muslims 4226, and out of 1943 properties, the number of Hindu properties was 98 and of Muslim properties 1845. The damage to property, both movable and immovable, was estimated to be of Rs 4,23,24,069.54p, out of which the damage to Hindu property was Rs 75,85,845, and to Muslim property was Rs 3,47,38,224.54p.

(11) *Baroda* (1969): According to the statement submitted by the District Magistrate to the Reddy Commission, the loss suffered by Muslims was Rs 33,26,006, and the loss suffered by the Hindus was Rs 4,58,210.

(12) *Delhi* (1973): Eight shops and a wooden khokha were burnt and a few others damaged. Of these, 6 shops belonged to Hindus and

2 to Muslims. Another house of a Hindu was partly damaged and yet another shop in the local market was partly burnt. The total estimated loss, according to the police sources, was: Hindus: Rs 3,22,145; Muslims: Rs 168,815. There was a fire in yet another market in which 250 shops were destroyed, and the estimate of loss varied from Rs one crore to Rs two crore. This fire was not specifically connected with the communal disturbances.

(13) *Delhi* (1974): The total damage to property was estimated to be Rs 12,00,450. No details for Hindu and Muslim losses are available. Of the 355 applicants to whom relief assistance was extended, 266 were Muslims and 89 were Hindus. From the data on applications for assistance it is evident that both Hindus and Muslims had suffered business losses, the latter perhaps more than the former.

The inquiry commissions have not systematically reported on attacks on and the damage done to religious places. Yet it is a recurring feature of communal riots. In the Ranchi-Hatia riot of 1967 three religious places were either burnt or otherwise damaged. The Ahmednagar riot of the same year began with the disfigurement of idols in the local temple of Markandeya. In the course of the disturbances twenty (possibly 29) mosques and tombs of pirs were damaged. According to the statement of the district magistrate submitted to the Raghubar Dayal Commission, "Muslim religious places were the main target of attack". In three years preceding the 1967 disturbances, according to police sources, there were 100 cases of desecration of Hindu temples and 77 holy places of Muslims. In the Ahmedabad disturbances of 1969, 37 mosques, 50 durgahs, 6 burial grounds, and three temples were damaged. In Baroda 12 mosques, 35 durgahs and four graveyards were damaged or destroyed during the disturbances of that year. One Hindu temple was also damaged. In the Bhiwandi riots of 1970 five mosques and four temples were damaged. In the Jalgaon disturbances of the same year two mosques were attacked.

It is very puzzling and deeply disturbing feature of many of the communal incidents that they were started or aggravated by a section of the Hindus. This is the evidence of most of the inquiry commissions' reports. The data on communal incidents compiled by the Ministry of Home Affairs for the period 1961-1970 show that of the 5189 incidents for which 'first resort to violence' by Hindus or Muslims could be identified, Hindus accounted for 3888, i.e. 75 per cent of the cases. While the 'first resort' data carry no explanatory value for making sense of communal riots, they nevertheless betray



a profound feeling of hostility among the Hindus towards Muslims.

Detailed data are not available for the period since 1970, but overall figures are available for the decade 1971-80. From them it is evident that during that decade the number of communal incidents were fewer than for the preceding decade. There were between 1971 and 1980; 2,572 communal incidents against 7,964 for 1961-70 period. This could be a misleading statistics in that the definition of 'incident' employed for the 1971-80 decade might be different from the one employed for the preceding decade. There were no 'major' riots during the 1971-80 period, and consequently the number of persons killed in riots is much smaller: 1185 against 3195 during 1961-70. Table 12 gives comparative data for the two decades.

The figures reflect greater violence in the 1970s than in the 1960s despite the fact that the 60s were characterised by at least six major riots, namely, Kourkela, Jamshedpur, Calcutta in 1964, Ranchi in 1967, Ahmedabad-Baroda in 1969, Bhiwandi-Jalgaon-Mahad in 1970. The death toll per incident in the 1961-70 decade was 0.40; in the next decade it was 0.46. The difference on account of injuries is much greater: the number of injured per incident was 1.52 in 1961-70 period; it was 5.94 for the next decade. The number of policemen killed had risen from 1 in 1961-70 to 13 in 1971-80 period and the number of policemen injured had gone up by 78 per cent for almost a quarter of the incidents.

The scale of communal violence has increased over the years. The states which were once free of it have now been affected. The issues continue to be those which agitated the rival communities in the past, i.e., music before mosques, cow slaughter, affront to women. To these has been added the new source of economic competition. Communal confrontations, when they take place, result in loss of life and property and damage to sacred places. Nearly all social groups, except the top elite, seem to participate in one way or another in these communal conflicts. They bear the characteristics of a semi-permanent group warfare which erupts without prior warning, the eruption often sparked off by some trivial incident, and at the end of it leaves everyone injured, impoverished, embittered and confirmed in their hostilities.

(To be continued)

#### Notes

[The study was made possible by a grant of Rs 25,000 made to the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies by the Gandhi Peace Foundation.]

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Gopal Krishna

The extent, the causes, the participants and the cost of communal disturbances since independence remain a careful scrutiny, which is attempted in this paper with the help of the data available in Section I. Sections II and III present a detailed report on the communal riot in Delhi of May 1974; Section II provides an account of the riot and Section III reports the results of a post-riot survey.

The paper is being published in two parts. The first part appeared last week.

## 11

## INTRODUCTION

DELHI is a city with a deep Islamic impact. For the best part of eight centuries it was the leading Muslim city in the sub-continent, the seat of Muslim power where Muslim culture flourished. The archaeological remains of various Muslim dynasties testify to the past dominance. The slow decay of Muslim power still left the city fundamentally Muslim in its ethos through much of the 19th and the 20th centuries. The really dramatic change came with independence in 1947, with its accompanying demographic and political revolution.

Like much of the rest of India, Delhi's population was stratified by caste and community. Since it was a centre for north Indian trade it had (and has) a vigorous trading community. Being the capital of a bureaucratic empire it had (and has) a large official class. Narayani Gupta tells us that the city began to acquire industry after 1880.<sup>14</sup> The leading local textile mill, the Delhi Cloth and General Mills Ltd, which was to be the source of several new enterprises in years to come, was founded in 1889. There developed several small factories producing furniture, printing, metal goods, handloom products, leather goods, jewellery, utensils, etc. over the years and with them the city acquired its small entrepreneurs as well as a modest-sized working class. The growth of small-scale enterprise has been accelerated in recent years. According to a 1969 census of industrial units in the Union Territory, co-ducted by the Directorate of Industries of the local administration, in 1969 there were 25,232 industrial units in the territory, employing 192,711 persons. In employment the small scale sector was preponderant, accounting for 76.6 per cent of employment in industry. The service sector was very large, and accounted for 36.8 per cent of the employed workers in the city in 1971.

The Hindus constituted nearly three

quarters of the population of Delhi at the turn of the century, but could not be said to provide the leading elements of the local society. If we are to treat the members of the municipality, established in 1863, as the elites of the city, as they were no doubt viewed half a century ago, then those identified by Gupta for the period 1863-1931 provide an interesting picture of social stratification over 7 decades. Among the 31 bankers there was not a single Muslim; among the 14 aristocrats there was not a single Hindu; of the 21 lawyers 10 were Muslims and 11 were Hindus; among 36 merchants 19 were Muslims; of the 9 Hakim and Doctors 6 were Muslim and three were Hindus; of the two educationists one was a Muslim, the other a Hindu. Of the total 113 men who served on the municipality whose professional background has been identified by Gupta, 50 were Muslims, and given the preponderance of bankers and merchants among the Hindus, it is evident that Muslims must have counted as the leading citizens and bearers of higher culture.

The population composition of Delhi has greatly changed since independence. The Hindus constituted 74.10 per cent of the city's population in 1901, 82.85 per cent in 1921, 84.16 per cent in 1951, and 83.82 per cent in 1971. The Muslims accounted for 24.28 per cent of the population in 1901, 32.53 per cent in 1921, 5.71 per cent in 1951 and 6.47 per cent in 1971. The Sikhs were a mere 0.04 per cent in 1901 and 1.01 per cent in 1951; they now account for 7.16 per cent of the population. These dramatic changes in the religious composition of the population are due to the massive movement of population in the aftermath of partition. In 1951, 28.4 per cent of Delhi's population consisted of refugees from West Pakistan. The magnitude of change in terms of numbers can be better appreciated if one notes that the total population of Delhi in 1901 was 405,819 and in 1951 it stood at 4,065,638—a ten-fold increase over seven decades.

The re-emergence of the city as the na-

tional capital in 1912, but especially after 1947, has also led to the development of the national press and an active cultural and intellectual life. In 1969, 28 dailies (41 in English, 7 in Hindi, 9 in Urdu and 1 in Punjabi), 192 weeklies, 116 fortnightlys, and 624 monthly magazines were published from Delhi.

The modern history of communal conflict in the city could be said to have begun in 1924 when a major communal riot took place in the month of July over the route to a slaughter house. The communal climate in north India had radically deteriorated in the aftermath of the collapse of the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements and a local factor led to a riot in Delhi in an area reserved for the home scene of the 1924 riot, which is the subject of this report. The riot resulted in the death of 15 Hindus and 14 Muslims and injuries to 95 Hindus, 30 Muslims and 4 policemen. The Muslims refused to accept refreshments from Hindus after 12.15. The politics of the city got wholly communalised over the following decades leading to partition in 1947.

As the national capital, Delhi receives the full impact of national policies. Indeed local politics is often overshadowed by the national policies. All the political parties are vociferously active and constantly take a hand in the affairs of the city. Since Delhi is a Union Territory, not a full-fledged state with legislative authority under the Constitution, it is subject to central control in all major areas of administration. The weight of the Central government is always felt in the political life of the city.

The local political leadership is overhauled by the national. In an earlier period the Mr. Doshi were national. Ajmal Khan and M. national leaders of the 19<sup>th</sup> independent local state. gross leader Bhilga are Gadhvi. The ex

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leaders K L Gupta, V K Malhotra are overshadowed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Muslims have not produced leaders of eminence since independence, and with the retirement of Mir Mustaq Ahmad, the former Chairman of the Metropolitan Council, and the death of Nuruddin Ahmad, the former Mayor of Delhi, they are almost literally leaderless.

Apart from all the major national political parties, Delhi is also the centre of all the major religious and communal organisations. The Jamiat ul-Ulama-e-Hind, the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Tablighi-Jamaat maintain their headquarters in the capital city. The two former bodies publish important journals as well as put out a great deal of propaganda literature. Among the Hindus the sectarian organisations which are active here include the Arya Samaj, the Sanatana Dharma Sabha and a host of caste and community associations. There are major institutions for the study of religion and culture, such as the Institute of Islamic Studies at Tughlaqabad and the International Institute of Indian Culture in Hauz Khas, which have come up since independence. The two national universities—the University of Delhi and the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi—along with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, the Indian Institute of Technology, and the Jamia Millia Islamia, greatly contribute to the intellectual life of the city.

The dramatically altered composition of the population after independence has not led to the abolition of communal politics but to the transformation of its character. If before 1947 the political conflict was between the Congress and the Muslim League, the post-independence competition has been between the Con-

gress, representing broadly nationalist-secular orientation, and the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (now the Bharatiya Janata Party), until recently representing Hindu-nationalist orientation. This is brought out clearly in the election results since 1952. In the seven Parliamentary elections over the 1952-1980 period the Jan Sangh and its successor parties have obtained between 25.9 to 46.7 per cent of the popular vote, while the Congress vote has fluctuated between 30.2 to 64.4 per cent.

In the local politics, i.e. within the Municipal Corporation and the Delhi Metropolitan Council, the same pattern of electoral support is repeated. In two elections, in 1967 and 1971, the Jan Sangh captured a majority of seats in the Corporation and dominated the civic life of the city. It won a majority in the Delhi Metropolitan Council in 1967 and again in 1977 under the banner of the Janata Party. The details of electoral support for different parties need not concern us here, but the main fact to be noted is the large, stable electoral base that the Jan Sangh (now the BJP) has established for itself in Delhi.

The Muslim League made its triumphant re-entry into Delhi's politics by winning the Ballimaran seat in the elections to the Metropolitan Council in 1971. Its support among the Muslim voters is still very small; even in the Ballimaran constituency it won the seat by a narrow margin of 452 votes, securing only 36.3 per cent of the valid votes polled. Looking at the electoral results in 12 Metropolitan Council constituencies in which the Muslim population of the city is concentrated, it would seem a reasonable inference that Muslims by and large have given their votes to the Congress, and to a very small extent to the Communist Party can-

didates. In these twelve constituencies the Congress gained 40.1 per cent of the votes cast in 1967 and 43.66 per cent in 1971, and since the Jan Sangh was its principal competitor, enjoying 43 per cent electoral support, it is very likely that the Muslim vote, in the main, must have gone to the Congress candidates. The Muslim League has not emerged as the party of the Muslims, but represents the durable communal element within the Muslim population, which had remained quiescent for a generation after partition but has now re-entered the political arena.

#### COMMUNAL SITUATION IN DELHI

The communal situation on the eve of the Sadar Bazar disturbances, the subject of this report, was unsatisfactory but quiescent. When we did our first survey in Delhi in 1971, in which respondents from Ballimaran and Bara Hindu Rao areas were interviewed, our Muslim respondents had told us that in the main the state of inter-community relations in the city was either poor or indifferent; our Hindu respondents in the cross-section sample had held them to be 'good'. The distribution of respondents' appraisal is presented in Table 13.

There was a marked dissonance between the Hindu and the Muslim respondents' views on the state of inter-community relations, but since such a large majority of Muslims took a depressing view of them it would be proper to view them to be at best unsatisfactory.

Since the 1971 survey was carried out there was a small scale riot in the Sadar Bazar area in 1973, and the 1974 riot could be said to be but a continuation of its predecessor. All riots in a city like Delhi are, in a sense, continuations of previous riots with different actors and different issues. They sustain a climate of communal hostility from which future riots develop. It would therefore be useful to reconstruct a brief history of past riots, especially those since 1954. This is done in the following paragraphs on the basis of the material compiled by the local administration.

Between 1954 and 1973—a period of twenty years—there was one long spell of peace between 1957 and 1960, otherwise there have been small disturbances every year, except 1964 and 1966. Since 1967 no year has been free of them. Over the two decades the Delhi administration records 39 disturbances, resulting in two deaths and 118 other casualties. The administration identified the following as the causes of the various disturbances, and the number of incidents to be attributed to each of them:

TABLE 13: INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONS (1971)

	Muslim Cross-Section	Hindu Cross-Section	Muslim Elite	Hindu Elite
Poor	45.1	12.4	36.8	11.2
Indifferent	41.1	22.4	36.8	44.4
Good	13.8	65.2	26.3	44.4

TABLE 14: AGE BREAK-UP OF POPULATION

Age	Cross-Section			Elite			Grand Total
	Hindus	Muslims	Total	Hindus	Muslims	Total	
Less than 20 years	3	—	3	—	—	—	3
20-29 years	26	34	60	—	5	5	65
30-39 years	17	34	51	1	2	3	54
40-49 years	9	19	28	3	11	14	42
50 years and over	9	23	32	5	5	10	42
N.A.	3	—	3	—	—	—	3
Total	67	110	177	9	23	32	209



Quarrels relating to religious processions congregations/festivals	6
Eve-teasing	12
Illicit relations/marriage of persons belonging to different communities	4
Transactional disputes, e.g., payment of fares, or for goods, etc.	6
Disputes at water-taps	2
Disputes between young boys of different communities	3
Miscellaneous	10
Total	43

It is evident from the above data that religious factors causing disturbances were few; most of them were of trivial character, and yet all of them produced communal conflict, thus confirming the proposition that communal discord is an ever present reality and that anything can spark off a communal riot—the only necessary condition is that the parties to a dispute be members of different communities.

The communal geography of Delhi has made Sadar Bazar the centre of tension for the past sixty years. As indicated earlier Sadar Bazar had witnessed a major disturbance in 1924. But in the aftermath of partition and the dramatic demographic changes in consequence of it, it had experienced several years of communal peace. Here Hindus and Muslims live side by side—in a heavily populated confined space. Its Hindu population has a very large component of refugees. The area is cut up into small concentrations

of Hindu and Muslim population, at once segregated and living in close proximity with each other.

The Sadar Bazar area is dominated by business and one trade or another is the chief element of its different localities. Thus Basti Harphool Singh has the more prosperous whole-sale merchants; Jatwara has a large number of businessmen, while Qasabpura is dominated by butchers and skin merchants. Pakki Gali, the scene of the 1973 riot, is the residential lane of businessmen, while Bagichi Achheji has its artisans, box makers, and little factories. Basti Julahan has its artisans, while Gali Barna has mostly the scheduled caste communities. Muslims are located largely in Qasabpura, Id Gah, Slaughter House area, Sarai Khali, Ahara Kedara, Shafiq Memorial, Mehalla Sheikhhan, Bara Hindu Rao and Gali Ishwari Prasad. At the time of the 1973 riot the total Muslim population of the area was about 50,000 or slightly less than one third of the total population, then estimated to be about 175,000.

The 1973 riot centred round two lanes in the Bara Hindu Rao area, namely, Pakki Gali and Bagichi Achheji. The population of Hindus in Pakki Gali was 3,000, and that of Muslim in Bagichi Achheji about 4,000. There were three or four Muslim families in the Pakki Gali and about the same number of Hindu families in Bagichi Achheji. There are

other spots of Muslim population in the neighbourhood.

The cause of the trouble, as mentioned above, was the defection of one Muslim from a Muslim group to another group identified with a Hindu. On the night of June 12 there was a pitched battle between the two groups. There was stone throwing from the houses of Bagichi Achheji (the Muslim lane) towards Pakki Gali (the Hindu lane) and from there towards Bagichi Achheji; before the police could bring the situation under control, the mob had set fire to shops of Hindus and Muslims at different places in the Bara Hindu Rao bazar. There was large scale pelting of stones, bottles, brick-bats and pieces of glass. The police at first resorted to tear-gas and when it has had no effect to firing, which brought the situation under control. The police firing resulted in the death of one man. Among the injured were 8 Hindus, 2 Muslims and 48 policemen. Eight shops, 7 of which belonged to Hindus and 2 to Muslims, and a wooden Khoka were burnt and a few others were damaged. Yet another shop in a nearby market was also burnt. The total estimated loss, according to police sources was: for the Hindus Rs 322,145; for the Muslims Rs 468,815.

The theories and explanations for this incident advanced by different partisans make an interesting and important story. According to the representations made to the one man Inquiry Commission (the Tandon Commission) set up by the Government of India, the leaders of the local Jan Sangh claimed that there was a Muslim plot to inflict losses on Hindus, and according to one Hindu resident of the area "The local Muslims were planning to create Bara (i.e. the Bara Hindu Rao locality) as a pure Muslim zone". The Muslim League leader Mohamud Ahmed told the Commission that the Jan Sangh people wanted to impress upon the Muslims that the Jan Sangh regime provided the best security to them. The theory of the plot did not have many supporters, and in support of its view that there was no plot behind the riot the Tandon Commission correctly pointed out that "the Hindu families residing in Bagichi Achheji were secure and unhurt, and that the Muslims who resided in Pakki Gali were also safe and unaffected." Tandon sagely observed: "It may perhaps be nearer the truth to say that on account of a certain atmosphere of tension and uneasiness in the area, every little thing assumes far greater importance than one would expect in a normal situation. The seeds of discontent and disaffection are rather to be discerned in the psychological

TABLE 15: EDUCATION PROFILE OF POPULATION

Education	Cross-Section			Elite			Grand Total
	Hindus	Muslims	Total	Hindus	Muslims	Total	
No education	8	53	61	—	3	3	64
Primary	10	15	25	—	1	1	26
Secondary							
(High School)	20	22	42	3	9	12	54
College and above	25	17	42	5	9	14	56
Technical	3	3	6	—	1	1	7
NA	1	—	1	1	—	1	2
Total	67	110	177	9	23	32	209

TABLE 16: LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN THE AREA

Length of Residence	Cross-Section			Elite			Grand Total
	Hindus	Muslims	Total	Hindus	Muslims	Total	
Always	31	51	83	2	13	15	98
Less than 5 years	4	9	13	—	1	1	14
5-10 years	4	10	14	—	2	2	16
11-19 years	12	12	24	—	1	1	25
20 years and more	7	12	19	7	4	11	30
NA	8	16	24	—	2	2	26
Total	67	110	177	9	23	32	209



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make-up of the two communities. While members of the two communities exchange greetings and pleasantries and occasionally participate in festivals, incidents of a trivial and inconsequential character assume disproportionate importance in their minds. He attributed the tendency to create a stir around any small friction to extreme overcrowding in the area.

One should, however, note that hundreds of potentially conflict-producing events do not result in actual conflict. The Deputy Commissioner of Delhi reports that between June 1973 and May 1974 there were 185 such events, any of which could have, but did not, result in a communal riot. (Prasad Commission's report on the Sadar Bazar Disturbances, 1974, p 203). On the other hand it provides a telling index of communal tension: there was an incident every 42.5 hours which could have plunged the city in communal conflict. It is a sobering statistic. This was the background to the riot of May 5, 1974.

#### THE RIOT OF MAY 5, 1974

It is a well-established and rather obvious proposition that communal riots take place in mixed localities. For the riot to occur it is not necessary that every street or Mohalla be of mixed population, but that different communities, in this case Hindus and Muslims, be living side by side. The pattern of habitation in Sadar Bazar is of this cellular kind—homogeneous units of population co-existing next to each other. In the circumstances of a riot these areas become communal fortresses, easily organised as defensive strongholds. They also make communal confrontations into massive displays of collective strength by the conflicting group. Large mobs collect at the openings of their respective streets shouting slogans, throwing stones at each other and generally in defensive postures. The mobs thus constituted when they have indulge in arson and looting rather than murder (though there have been cases elsewhere in India of mobs setting on the members of the adversary community living in their midst and killing them or burning them to death). The act of killing is done by individuals and takes the form of stabbing, and now also of shooting. In the violence that always accompanies communal conflict the role of the bad characters—the gundas—of the area cannot be exaggerated. They perpetrate the arson, the looting and the murder. And yet a communal riot is simply not just one more form of lawlessness. What distinguishes it from other types of lawlessness is that it carries distinct overtones of collective warfare, indulged in by groups of

people living next to each other, engaging in daily transactions, but living in a climate of deep mutual hostility. These acts of warfare are always inconclusive, as they are bound to be, and leave both sides to it injured and impoverished. In their aftermath those who can leave the area in search of greater security; those who cannot live in fear of the next round of conflict. Permanent ill-concealed mutual animosity and anxiety informs the ethos of the affected areas. This may seem an overdrawn picture, but I think not; it represents the truth as far as can be judged from the accounts of communal conflicts and their aftermath available to us. The story of the Sadar Bazar in Delhi is not dissimilar.

#### ORIGINS OF RIOT

The disturbances of the May 5 had their origins in a minor quarrel. For the details of this account I have relied on the Delhi administration's sources and the report of the enquiry into the riot conducted by P Prasad for the Government of India. The story of the incident is as follows: On May 4, 1974 one Vishwanath, son of Kashiram, resident of 9061, Gali Millwall, Azad Market, went with his family to see a film at a cinema—Palace Talkies—for the 9 p m to 12 p m show. Two boys of Kishanganj (later the scene of major violence), namely Nasim Ahmed, alias Baboo, son of Mohammed Ayub, resident of house No 1126, Gali Anarwali, and Iqbal, son of Abdul Sattar, resident of house No 1045, Gali Anarwali, had also gone to see the film. After the film Vishwanath and his family members were standing outside the hall when Nasim and Iqbal crossed through them two or three times. Vishwanath took exception to this

and accosted Nasim Ahmed for his misbehaviour and manhandled him. Ibrahim, son of Mohammad Usman, resident of house No 934, Gali Lambi, Mohalla Kishanganj, who also happened to be there along with his family, intervened and the matter was amicably settled. However, next morning (May 5) Nasim Ahmed narrated the treatment received by him from Vishwanath to his friends, who then went to a Muslim friend of Vishwanath's by the name Khalil Ahmed, of Gali Lambi, and asked him to meet Vishwanath in connection with the incident. Khalil Ahmed's exertions did not satisfy Nasim Ahmed and his friends, and when later in the day they encountered Vishwanath they engaged in a quarrel with him, assaulted him and threw him on the ground. As the scuffle was in progress, Vishwanath was joined by some others, and the quarrel which originally started as a fight between two groups assumed the shape of confrontation between Muslims on one side and the Hindus on the other. The centre of the trouble was the Kishanganj Chowk and the crowd mostly of Muslims. Here a large group was indulging in brick-battling and throwing of soda water bottles and other missiles. Missiles were also being thrown from the top of the Imliwadi mosque and adjoining buildings in Kishanganj Chowk. When the police made a cane charge to disperse the crowd, the police party became the target of the miscreants. Soon after the trouble had begun arson had started and a shop below the Imliwadi mosque was on fire. Heavy brick-battling was going on and some miscreants had also started throwing fireballs. Some persons were trying to set fire to more shops. Soon arson had spread over a larger area.

TABLE 17: OCCUPATION

Occupation	Cross-Section			Elite			Grand Total
	Hindus	Muslims	Total	Hindus	Muslims	Total	
Manual	4	19	23	—	—	—	23
Service (low)	3	9	17	—	1	1	18
Service (middle)	19	14	33	1	1	2	35
Service (high)	2	1	3	2	4	5	9
Professional	4	4	8	2	1	3	11
Artisan	—	17	17	—	1	1	18
Business (petty)	11	14	25	2	1	3	28
Business (substantial)	1	6	7	—	9	9	16
Household duty	14	24	38	—	4	4	42
Student/Retired	3	2	5	1	—	1	6
Social and political worker	—	—	—	1	1	2	2
NA	1	—	1	—	—	—	1
Total	67	110	177	9	23	32	209



The police party was finding it impossible to make an effective entry into Chowk Kishanganj and quell the trouble because they were under a heavy shower of brickbats and glass missiles being thrown from the houses located on either side of Chowk Kishanganj and particularly from behind the Imliwali mosque. The fire-tenders, parked some distance away, were not proceeding to Chowk Kishanganj for fear of mob violence. As time passed the riotous crowd regrouped itself and when the police made a cane charge and used teargas the miscreants dispersed and went deep into the by-lanes of the area. The fires had assumed serious proportions, brick-battling was going on intermittently and riotous crowds were spread over a sizeable area. As the police prepared to clear the path for the Fire Brigade vehicles, they found themselves subjected to firing from the direction of the mosque and the adjoining building. Fireballs were also thrown on the police party from the top of houses in the Faiyaz Ganj area. The police dealt with the snipers from the roof-tops as well as from the ground, and when they ran away the firemen were able to extinguish the fires at Imliwali mosque.

There were other incidents of arson in the neighbourhood. A thread making factory in the Faiyaz Ganj was set on fire: a crowd had collected in the by-lane, miscreants got hold of thread spindles, soaked them in oil and threw back the burning spindles in the direction of the factory. Workers were entrapped in the factory. The police broke open the factory doors and rescued the trapped workers. The fire brigade staff extinguished the fire.

The worst incidence in the riot was the firing from the ventilator and window openings of a house in Mohalla Kishanganj. Several persons had been hit by the snipers at this place. In the neighbourhood of Mohalla Kishanganj there were disturbances on Bahadurgarh Road and Phoota Road. There was stone throwing, burning and looting of shops in this area. In Qasabpura there was heavy brick-battling and throwing of bottles from roof-tops. There was trouble in the Motia Khan area where some shops and a vehicle had been set on fire, and in Multani Dhanda area 5 shops were damaged on account of arson.

The local administration imposed curfew in the area of the Sadar Bazar police station. It was kept in force for the next 44 days, with gradual relaxation. There were no incidents after the first day of rioting.

In the incidents of May 5, 11 persons were killed: 8 Hindus, 1 Sikh, and 2 Muslims. Ten deaths took place during the

riot, and one some weeks later. Six of the killed had bullet injuries and 5 gunshot injuries. Two of those killed (both Muslims) had been hit by police firing. One hundred and forty-six persons were injured, including 23 policemen and 2 firemen. Injury records available for 76 persons show that 63 had fire-arm injuries and 16 blunt or sharp-edged weapon injuries. Of the injured persons 92 were Hindus, 16 Muslims, 23 policemen and 2 firemen.

In the incidents the police fired 166 rounds and 26 tear-smoke shells and grenades. From the side of the public one gun and one rifle were used and about 150 rounds were fired.

197 applications seeking financial relief were received by the Delhi administration. The total damage to property of these 197 applicants was estimated at Rs 12,00,450.

Non-governmental organisations also organised relief for the victims of the riot. According to official sources the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Muslim League, the Jamiat ul-Ulama-e-Hind, and the Tabligh-i-Jamaat between them collected and disbursed Rs 44,260. The Embassies of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait contributed Rs 10,000 through the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind. The Hamdard Dawakhana contributed Rs 5,000 to the Kishanganj Relief Committee. The Delhi State Jan Sangh collected through donations a sum of Rs 38,500.

#### SOME TESTIMONIES

The one man-Commission of Inquiry, the Prasad Commission, took evidence from 114 non-official witnesses, and has published a few extracts from the testimonies of 12 of them in its final report. These excerpts are of interest to us in that they show how Hindus and Muslims reconstructed the events of May 5 and laid responsibility for them on the adversary community.

(1) Girhari Lal, an ice vendor who had a shop in Kishanganj Chowk and who witnessed the attack on Vishwanath, told the Prasad Commission that he beseech-

ed Vishwanath's assailants to leave him but they paid no heed. When Vishwanath fell down, stone throwing started and soda-water bottles were also flung from both sides. A crowd of Hindus collected on the main Azad Market Road while from the mosque and the building adjacent to it fireballs were thrown on the fire-wood stall; gun fire also commenced from the windows of the mosque and its adjacent building. If the Muslims assailants of Vishwanath had listened to him, the trouble would not have spread, but once it spread, Muslims collected from the direction of the mosque and the Hindus from the side of Tokriwala and the Azad Market Road. The riot started suddenly and respectable people were taken by surprise, not knowing how it had happened.

(2) Shyam Chaman Gupta, a member of the Delhi Metropolitan Council, representing the 'Jaiwala-Deputy Ganj constituency, and President of the *Sadar Bazar, Dargah, Pidi, Sahayata Samiti* (Sadar Bazar Riot Relief Committee—a Hindu organisation), told the Prasad Commission that most members of the public (meaning the Hindu public in the area) whom he had met on the day of the riot had complained to him that the Muslims had been very aggressive and that a small matter had been blown up to such vast proportions. They came to know that while two Muslims had died because of police firing, 8 Hindus had been the victims of the firing from the Muslims' side. This had caused much anger. The Muslim members of the public had complained that the police had shown slackness in controlling the riot. The police officers to whom he spoke had said that they had never anticipated such a big riot which was fought out in a very organised and determined manner.

Gupta stated that the communal feeling among the Muslims had been strengthened after the 1971 Muslim League session in Bareilly. The political factor was also important. He felt that the Congress, the Muslim League and the Communist parties worked more or less

TABLE 18: PARTY PREFERENCES

Party Preference	Cross Section			Elite			Grand Total
	Hindus	Muslims	Total	Hindus	Muslims	Total	
Congress	22	30	52	4	9	13	65
Jan Sangh	14	3	17	—	—	—	17
CPI/CPM	2	2	4	1	3	4	8
Others	1	23	24	—	3	3	27
No party	25	16	41	3	6	9	50
NA	3	36	39	1	2	3	42
Total	67	110	177	9	23	32	209



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jointly in this area against the Jan Sangh. Hindu-Muslim differences have widened (on account of, among other reasons, teasing of Hindu girls by Muslims) and the Congress party tries to get some benefit out of this, hoping to get Muslim support in the elections. As a result of it the authorities do not find out who are the real culprits in cases of misdemeanour but try to see that members of both the communities are dealt with more or less in equal proportions. He alleged that the Congress leaders try to shield the miscreants and even give them protection.

(3) Ram Lal Asri, a Jan Sangh member, of the Delhi Municipal Corporation from the Teliwada area, told the Commission that the politics of the Congress party was responsible for the communal friction in the area. In Sheesh Mahal, the area of which he was a resident, there was no trouble and although it is a mixed locality of Hindus and Muslims they had all joined together in ensuring that there was no trouble there and had kept out the outside trouble-makers. From the time he became a member of the Corporation, Diwali and Id were celebrated together in Kishanganj and there was communal unity. There is, however, one section among the Kishanganj Muslims which is connected with the Muslim League and which is encouraged by the Congress. When there was a Jan Sangh administration in Delhi from 1967 to 1972 there was communal trouble.

(4) S M Yahya Chhabra, a businessman residing in Mohalla Kishanganj, who was also the Mutawalli of the Masjid Ahle-Hadis in Teliwada, and Secretary of the Kishanganj Relief Committee (a Muslim organisation), told the Prasad Commission that on May 5 he saw that stone throwing was going on between two parties at Kishanganj Chowk, the non-Muslims from the Azad Market side and Muslims from the Chowk Kishanganj side. Later he had seen arson in the Kishanganj mosque building as well as in the near portions of some houses of the Kishanganj Mohalla on the Bahadurgarh Road side. Later in the afternoon there was heavy stone throwing from the crowd collected in Gali Bahuji. The Muslim families living in the houses abutting Bahadurgarh Road took refuge in other

houses in the Mohalla since there was a risk of fire spreading further following the arson in their own houses. The Ahle-Hadis mosque was extensively damaged.

In his view no prior planning seemed to be evident on the part of any community but at the same time he felt the small quarrel could not have spread so widely without some people jumping in and trying to aggravate matters. Wherever Muslims live in localities within the Sadar Bazar Police Station area like Kishanganj, Sheesh Mahal, Baira Hindu Rao, they live there in small pockets and they are not in such a position as to provoke the majority community or start trouble themselves because they would be the sufferers in the end. So, broadly, the Muslim attitude is a defensive one. One thing noteworthy about the riot was that the riotous mob selected only Muslim-owned properties like mosques, houses and shops for arson or destruction but scrupulously avoided doing any damage to Hindu-owned houses or temples or properties.

There was police failure to control the situation in Kishanganj Chowk in good time. They did not take firm action against anti-social elements and such persons were free to cause trouble whenever there was an excuse for it. Yahya Chhabra alleged that the firing in Kishanganj Chowk was by both Hindus and Muslims. Muslims were defending themselves; they started firing only when arson commenced in their buildings and properties. The delayed action by the police could give rise to the inference that they were indifferent and thus encouraged rioters. It was his view that the area was full of communal-minded Hindus and was a centre of activity of communal bodies like the Jan Sangh and the RSS, and they did not like the fact the Muslims of the area stand by the Congress party.

(5) Harbas Lal, a vegetable seller in Chowk Kishanganj, thought that though this riot flared up suddenly, the Muslims were always prepared and kept material for fighting handy. From the speed with which bottles, stones, bricks, etc started being thrown and also firing started from the Muslim side, he thought they must have collected all this in advance for use in a riot.

(6) Bhupendra Kumar Batra, Advocate,

whose father owned a shop dealing in old cloth at Kishanganj Chowk, submitted in his statement to the Prasad Commission that he saw that from the top of the mosque there was gun fire and throwing of stones and acid bottles at the Hindu and Sikh public standing in the Chowk. Fire tenders were present but they could not reach the place because they had to take shelter from firing and brick-bats. Several buildings were on fire, including some portion of the mosque because the adjoining firewood stall belonging to a Hindu had caught fire. The police were hesitant to move further on the Chowk and resort to firing to put down the disturbance. Finally, when they moved forward bullets came from the side of the mosque and the Deputy Inspector General of Police was injured from the gun fire coming from the mosque side. Baira himself was hit in his chest, left eye-brow and left wrist; 13 bullets were extracted from his body.

Batra belonged to no political party, and held the view that innocent people had suffered because of very bad politics; two or three bad characters, well connected with some political party or other, were the source of the trouble. From what he saw of the incidents on May 5, 1974, the action taken by the authorities was neither firm nor adequate, but in his opinion this was because most officers of the administration did not want to attract the wrath of the political bosses. He felt that most of the criminals are not dealt with by the police and authorities because political leaders or legislators or Councillors gave shelter to those criminals.

(7) Khurshid Begum, resident of Mohalla Kishanganj, heard of the disturbances from some children of the area. Then she noticed that many ruffians had come out from Gali Bahuji on the Bahadurgarh Road and were running towards her house. They had iron bars, acid bottles and also fire balls of cloth dipped in kerosene oil which they were throwing in the direction of her own and neighbouring houses. The crowds stopped buses, trucks and scooters and collected petrol out of them and also from the drums of petrol or oil from shops inside Bhagwananj, opposite Mohalla Kishanganj. Material for road repair was also lifted and thrown towards her house and

TABLE 19: PERFORMANCE OF PUJA/OFFER OF PRAYER

	Everyday		Once a Week		On Special Occasions		Never		Total	
	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent
Hindus	49	64.47	—	—	19	25.00	8	10.53	76	100.00
Muslims	74	55.64	42	31.58	12	9.02	5	3.75	133	100.00



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neighbouring houses. The mob set fire to a number of Muslim houses and shops. Shutters were lifted and broken and arson committed. Nothing was done against Hindu shops. Later on police came but they gave no help to the inmates of Muslim houses but climbed up to the roof tops of the opposite side houses of Bhagwanganj and started firing towards the Muslim houses of Kishanganj Mohalla. But the Hindu mobs continued active below on the ground. She was not aware of any action being taken from the Muslim houses against such mob activity. Khurshid Begum thought it most peculiar that the police instead of helping those who were targets of attack helped the attackers, and did not even permit Muslims to put out fires in their own houses. She held that the police and the local Jan Sangh leaders, S C Gupta, member of the Metropolitan Council, and Ram Lal Asri, Member of the Municipal Corporation, to be in league with the gundas who were busy setting fire to houses and shops. Tyres were burnt to spread the fire and they climbed on ladders to set fire to wooden windows. The police firing continued till about 6 p.m. and whenever from the Muslim side people came out to extinguish the fires, the police fired at them and compelled them to go inside. That night after the curfew nobody came to enquire about their situation. Children were crying with hunger and water taps had been shut. Her own third floor house was not damaged, the possible explanation

being the presence of Hindu shops below the house.

(8) Nanak Chand Gupta, working in the Tata Oil Mills, Delhi, and a resident of Mohalla Ahiran, Pahadi Dhiraj, reported to the Inquiry Commission that his cousin Satya Narain, a daily worker in the Delhi Water Supply Undertaking, was killed from the gunfire coming from the houses opposite the junction of Gali Bahuji with Bahadurgarh Road. Gupta was of the opinion that the communally segregated pattern of habitation is not conducive to good mutual relations and people should live together in mixed localities.

(9) Deen Dayal Sharma, formerly a school master, refugee from Pakistan, has been living in Bhagwanganj since 1949. He saw stones, bricks, soda water bottles being thrown from the Muslim houses and firing coming from two of those houses; he saw a Hindu inhabitant of his locality coming in bleeding profusely, and also two boys bleeding from bullet injuries. All were sent to hospital in scooters.

The Hindus, according to him, had nothing with which they could have done anything in reply. He admitted that a number of persons were trying to set fire to the houses of Muslims. These persons had covered their faces so he could not say whether they were Hindus or Muslims. However, this attempt to set fire was only after the Muslims started firing. It was his guess that the other side (i.e. Muslims)

must have made preparation for this trouble.

(10) A Q A Ahsan, a resident of Mohalla Kishanganj, employed with the Hamdard Dawakhana and its two research institutes, viz. the Institute of History of Medicine and Medical Research and the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, told the Prasad Commission that his house on the Bahadurgarh Road side was attacked and partially burnt by a mob. There were three attacks in the course of the afternoon of May 5, during which whatever there was in the living room and the *machan* above it was looted and burnt. He took his children into a neighbouring house and then came back and tried to put out the fire in his house. There was only one hand pump in a neighbouring house but there was no proper way for throwing water on the rising fire. To add to their difficulties tear gas shells fell on the roof of the house which filled their eyes with tears and children started crying. The police were nowhere to be seen. There were large crowds on the roof tops of the houses on the other side of the Bahadurgarh Road and from there stones and bottles were being freely thrown on the Muslim houses. It was only after 6 or 7 p.m. when curfew was announced that the situation eased. The fire brigade did not come to Bahadurgarh Road that day at all but only on the next day.

(11) Sirajuddin, a resident of Ughah Road, Sadar Bazar, a dealer in live-stock, told the Inquiry Commission that on May 5, 1974 a mob of Hindus attacked Muslims and their business establishments and set them to fire near the Sadar Bazar police station. The police did nothing to prevent it. The rioters took the scooter from his godown and set fire to it and later to his car. Some animals from his godown were carried away by the rioters and other goods and property of his were damaged. He did not make any complaint to any police officer because he feared that he would be locked up if he did so. The damage to his own property was about Rs 27,000.

The Hindus and the Muslims offered entirely different versions of the events of that tragic day in Sadar Bazar.

### III.

#### Post-Riot Survey

The May 1974 riot was the worst that Delhi had experienced after independence. Because of the gravity of the riot the Centre for the Study of Development Societies decided to undertake an in-depth study of some of the larger questions of inter-community relations in the riot affected

TABLE 20: HINDU-MUSLIM RELATIONS FIVE YEARS AGO

Respondents	Code Categories								
	Good		Bad		Indifferent		Total		
	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	
Hindu CS	31	46.26	10	14.92	26	38.80	67	100	
Hindu Elite	5	55.55	2	22.22	2	22.22	9	100	
Muslim CS	17	15.45	23	20.90	70	63.63	110	100	
Muslim Elite	13	56.52	1	4.34	9	39.13	23	100	
Total	66	31.57	36	17.22	107	51.19	209	100	

TABLE 21: HINDU-MUSLIM RELATIONS FIVE YEARS AGO—BY AGE GROUPS

Respondents	Code Categories								
	Good		Bad		Indifferent		Total		
	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	
Less than 25 years	12	26.66	9	20.00	24	53.33	45	100	
26-40 years	26	29.54	14	15.90	48	54.54	88	100	
41 and above	28	36.84	13	17.10	35	46.05	76	100	
Total	66	31.57	36	17.22	107	51.19	209	100	



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area as well as in the wider city with a view to arriving at some understanding of how people directly affected as well as those living at a distance thought about the riot and what implications that in turn had for national integration. Our objective in this study was not to test some hypothesis/es bearing on inter-community relations but to explore the mentalities of the relevant sections of the citizens.

The study entailed preparation of a suitable questionnaire, drawing up of a sample of male and female cross-section and elite respondents both from among the Hindus and the Muslims in the riot-affected area as well as elsewhere in the city. It was decided to interview a larger number of Muslims than Hindus partly because the Muslim minority is concentrated in the riot-affected area and because the Muslim orientations are crucial for understanding the larger consequences of communal conflict. The overall distribution of the sample was determined in the ratio of 2 Muslims to 1 Hindu respondent.

The questionnaire was prepared soon after the May riot and trial interviews were carried out during the course of June. The cross-section sample was drawn from the electoral rolls for the riot-affected areas. The elite sample was drawn up in consultation with informants of the area, and was designed to ensure that certain types of notables were interviewed for the study.

The survey covered ten localities in the Sadar Bazar area. They were: Kishan Ganj, Bara Hindu Rao, Qasab Pura, Deputy Ganj, Sarai Khalil, Azad Market, Birla Bagh, Nabi Karim, Motia Khan, Sadar-Thana Road. In these localities a total of 153 interviews were conducted between July 1 and September 17, 1974. They consisted of 133 cross-section (49 Hindu—34 men and 15 women, and 84 Muslim—59 men and 25 women) and 20 elite (8 Hindus and 12 Muslims) respondents.

Outside the Sadar area a total of further 56 interviews were conducted, consisting of 19 Hindus (18 cross-section (13 men, 5 women) and 1 elite), and 37

Muslims [26 cross-section (all men) and 11 elite (3 men and 8 women)]. They were drawn from 12 areas of the city, Ballimaran, Kucha Pandit/Lal Kuan, Naya Bans, Chandni Chowk, Ahari Gate, Juknan Gate, Chawri Bazar, Bazar Sitarom, Jama Masjid, Darya Ganj, Nizamuddin, and Jamia Nagar.

The total sample consisted of 209 persons: 177 cross-section and 32 elite respondents. The Muslim interviews were carried out by three trained Muslim investigators, and the Hindu interviews by a Hindu investigator. Women's interviews were done by a female investigator. All the interviews were conducted in the respondent's own language. The elite respondent categories covered for this study are: journalists, civil servants, teachers, businessmen, political leaders, writers, doctors, lawyers, artist and Moulvis.

In the following paragraphs we provide some relevant characteristics of the sample. Table 14 gives the age break-up, separately for Hindus and Muslims for the cross-section and elite samples.

The dominant age group in our sample, accounting for 77 per cent of the respondents, was between 20 and 49 years of age. This is the active element in the population. But in public affairs age carries very considerable weight, on account of experience and understanding associated with it, and this was provided for in our sample by persons of 50 and above who represented just over 20 per cent of the respondents.

There is a rather marked overrepresentation of the educated in the sample: 65 per cent of our cross-section respondents and 87.5 of the elite respondents have had some education. The preponderance of the educated among the Hindu respondents was greater than among the Muslim respondents. This is no great disadvantage in an enquiry of this kind, provided those without education are adequately represented. The educational profile of the sample is presented in Table 15.

The next relevant variable is the length of residence in the area. Most of our

respondents have been long resident in the areas in which they were living at the time of the survey, and thus well able to answer our questions with adequate knowledge of the conditions of the area, the state of inter-community relations and offer reflections on the causes of communal conflict. Table 16 provides the distribution of respondents by length of residence in the area.

Table 17 shows the occupational distribution of the respondents.

All the major elements in the composition of the population are well represented in our sample. A four-fold classification of all the respondents, would produce the following distribution: 1. Manual + artisans + service (low) = 59 (28.36 per cent); 2. Service (middle) + service (high) + professional section and political work = 57 (27.40 per cent); 3. Business (petty) + business (substantial) = 44 (21.53 per cent); 4. Household duty + student/retired = 48 (23 per cent). Here too one should not look for representativeness of the sample, but adequacy of representation of the different segments of the population divided into broad classes. This is well provided in our sample.

Lastly, we come to the political orientations of the respondents. These are considered crucially important, for communal conflict always has strong political overtones. It is therefore necessary to ensure that all the major political tendencies are adequately represented in the sample. Since the sample is weighted in favour of Muslims there is, relative to its electoral support, over-representation of the Congress supporters among the respondents, and relative under-representation of the Jan Sangh supporters. Since party membership is acknowledged by only about 35 per cent of the respondents, we have used the alternative measure of closeness to a particular party to determine their political affiliation. The distribution is presented in Table 18.

In the following pages we present the qualitative and quantitative results of the survey. The primary focus of the survey was on inter-community relations, and it is to the questions relating to these that we turn first. It is increasingly recognised in literature on communal conflict in India that it does not originate wholly, or even primarily, in the religious concerns of the Hindus and the Muslims. Members of both the communities are intensely religious in their orientation and consider religiousness as a good, indeed quality. In our survey on communities we had asked a question: 'It is said that for the good of the country Hindu should cease to be Hindu.'

TABLE 22: HINDU MUSLIM RELATIONS FIVE YEARS AGO

Respondents	Code Categories							
	Good		Bad		Indifferent		Total	
	S	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per cent
High	5	16.66	4	13.33	21	70.00	30	100
Middle	50	34.96	25	17.48	63	47.55	143	100
Low	11	30.55	7	19.44	18	50.00	36	100
Total	66	31.57	56	17.22	107	51.19	209	100



and Muslims should cease to be Muslims or Hindus should become better Hindus and Muslims should become better Muslims, what do you think? The responses we got showed that there was an overwhelming preference for the latter position: 96.6 per cent of the cross-section and 98.1 per cent of the elite Muslim respondents preferred that for the good of the country Hindus should become better Hindus and Muslims should become better Muslims. Among the Hindus 38.1 per cent of the elite and 84.1 per cent of the cross-section expressed the same view. In the present survey a very large majority of respondents indicated that they practice religion. This was particularly evident from responses to question No 11, which asked whether the respondent offered prayer, and how often, or if he/she performed *pūja* and how often. The results are presented in Table 19.

Given this disposition towards religion neither Muslims nor Hindus would view it as a possible source of communal conflict, which they do consider to be utterly evil. It is also relevant to note that in the 20th century the dominant Indian political ideology has emphasised the idea of the 'fundamental unity of all religions', and secularism in our society has not been presented as antithetical to religion but as supportive of freedom of religion on the premise that religion is basically a good thing.

Despite this inter-community relations have been characterised by tension, ill-will, and increasing violence. Our respondents have tended to see the source of this in politics. For Hindus and Muslims alike politics has been a dominant concern at least for the last hundred years, if not longer. Politics is about power, and in an agglomerative society concern with power is paramount because it determines the access to economic and cultural resources and thus determines the relative ranking and the future of the constituent elements.

TABLE 23: EXTENT OF MUTUAL HOSTILITY BETWEEN HINDUS AND MUSLIMS

Respondents	Code Categories								Total
	A Great Deal		Some		Very Little		None		
	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	
Hindus (A) i)	28	36.84	14	18.42	31	40.78	3	3.94	76
ii)	44	57.39	8	10.52	22	28.94	2	2.63	
Muslims (B) i)	16	12.03	56	42.10	45	33.88	16	12.03	133
ii)	42	32.33	34	25.56	41	30.82	15	11.27	

Notes: (A) i) Hindus are hostile towards Muslims. ii) Muslims are hostile towards Hindus.  
(B) i) Muslims are hostile towards Hindus. ii) Hindus are hostile towards Muslims.

of the society.

There is a general, and justified, presumption that when people appraise each other negatively they develop antipathy towards each other, and this then becomes a source of hostility, tension, leading to violence. What leads people to make negative appraisals of others is a different question. Nor should one attach much weight to the contents of such appraisals, for their truth value is extremely small. In the literature on inter-community relations a great deal of attention is paid to prejudice, with the expectation that prejudice is likely to be replaced by enlightenment once it is identified as such. This appears to me an unwarranted expectation because prejudice is not merely ignorant opinion but has an important function in the struggle for dominance that is such an overwhelming feature of inter-community relations in India, as elsewhere. And yet it is important to discover what people think about each other for it is on that basis that they order their own strategies, responses, expectations, etc. It is also important to discover what people think of themselves and the consequent dissonance this must produce between the two sets of appraisals. So we asked our Hindu and Muslim respondents what deficiencies did they see in their own and in the other community. Since the question was open-ended and responses qualitative in character, I reproduce below a representative sample of them in an abbreviated form.

#### (A) Hindu View of Muslims

Bring religion into everything; without thinking quarrel in the name of religion; lack sentiment of nationalism; look up to Pakistan; are poor, backward in education; there are no deficiencies in them; a Muslim defends another Muslim; even if he be in life wrong; don't see the man but look to his religion; are frightened; accord low status to women; fanatical in religious

matters; forgetting their religion and those who forget religion are lost; ignorant; cast evil eye on other people's women; religious and communal minded; think of themselves as superior—we have nothing to do with them and don't know anything about them; because of excessive religious feeling they can't live in harmony here; don't bother about cleanliness; get excited in the name of community when in India they are not lacking in anything; weak, engaged in increasing their population; narrow-minded; think of themselves as separate; do not regard the country as their own; their religion and traditions are against us; so long as they don't practise family planning their condition will not improve; too many children means lack of education for them; also makes for over-crowding and there is always the danger of quarrels; consider Hindus Kaffirs; untrustworthy; quarrelsome and harsh; quarrel several times; we do not like their ways; eat meat.

#### Muslim View of Muslims

Muslims quarrel among themselves, persecute others, lack capacity for curing, womanise, waste time on bird games; have moved away from religion, shave beards, listen to music on radio; run away from prayer; do not learn from experience; jealousy; waste money on self-indulgence; lack of education, which is the source of all the problems; they are ignorant and speak plainly, which is a sort of deficiency in this age; lack of unity, poverty, cowardly; live in dirty environment; gambles; do not work hard; do not get together on a common political platform; don't know how to do business; no leadership; ignorant of the times and the scheming ways of the world; deceive; are untrustworthy; loss of character; have moved away from religion; lack of foresight; the worst thing is that they are Muslims, and even worse is that they live in India; have become victims of inferiority feeling; have forgotten their own principles and are following in the foot-steps of others; dislike of secularism; there is nothing wrong with Muslims—it is all made up by the Hindus that they are anti-nation; they lack a leader who will show them the right way and build unity among them; no movement, no leadership; gundalism; not enough religious education; lack of faith; produce too many children; no motivation to progress; don't practise family planning and are, therefore, poor; circumstances have compelled them to think of themselves as slaves; their so-called leaders injure them for their own selfish interests; blind belief; lack political awareness; limited opportunities of progress; spend; thrift; wrong kind of religious fanaticism; the ulama have neglected their duty; do







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not help each other; unreliable; don't take advantage of the facilities provided by the government.

### (B) Hindu View of Hindus

There is nothing wrong with the Hindus; there is no unity among the Hindus; get misled; poverty, lack of education; selfish, superstitious; run away from light, backward in religion, engaged in pulling each other down; religious fanaticism; consider India only their own country; want of co-operation; blinded by religion; casteism; communal minded, quarrelsome; are democratic; do not help Muslims and take advantage of their weakness; lack political consciousness; not farsighted; rich-poor sentiment; have forgotten their own religion; divided between many castes; victims of blind faith; enmities over money; decline in religious faith.

### Muslim View of Hindus

Hindus hate Muslims, whom they consider to be dirty, which is not true; Hindus do not have business dealings with Muslims; untouchability; dislike of Muslims; dislike of Kashmiris; there is nothing wrong with the Hindus—practise a little discrimination; don't consider Harijans human; are afraid of meat; seek to dominate; with the help of the government; drink alcohol, gamble, womanise; there is a lot that is wrong with the Hindus, but wealth hides it; do not respect religion, run after wealth, worship money; refugees have created a mentality of discrimination against Muslims; suspect everyone; are wicked; don't have much dealing with Hindus; very cowardly; commerce and trade is their special occupation, and doing everything proper and improper they consider good; every Hindu practices discrimination; do not trust Muslims, look upon them as Pakistani agents and remove them from offices; do not respect other communities in the country; greedy; communal minded; not only Muslims, but no other community in the world has been able to understand Hindus; they are duplicitous; one thing inside, another outside, do not try to understand Muslims; don't live in friendship, don't consider Muslims to be Indians; are

engaged in finding ways to weaken Muslims materially; weak-minded; don't help in need; quarrel over trivial matters; hoarding habit; don't buy goods from Muslims; narrow-minded; unreliable; can't bear to see Muslims happy; there is nothing wrong with the Hindus, except that they are hostile to Muslims; put barriers in the path of progress of other communities; want to expel Muslims from India, take interest; enmity towards Muslims in trade; consider people of other religions inferior; the greatest deficiency in them is that they are not willing/able to accept Muslims; lack progressive outlook; saturated with communal feeling—even for a doctor they want a Hindu; nothing wrong with them—they are sharp and making progress; victims of inferiority complex; moving away from their own religion; decline of character; the ordinary Hindu is not so communal-minded, although during a riot a few communal-minded came to the forefront; on the whole Hindus are good—Muslims by their own ignorance (jahalat) made them hostile (towards Muslims).

Although our question may be said to be biased towards eliciting negative responses, which it was intended to do, it is important to notice the contents of the responses themselves. On the whole the Muslim responses are more expressive than those of the Hindus. It is clear that the Muslims think that the Hindus are suspicious of them and practice discrimination, while Hindus, on the whole, confirm the suspicion and see Muslims as 'excessively religious'. Other identified deficiencies seem to me to lack the force of this particular characterisation, especially in its implication for inter-community relations and national integration.

The next question I want to consider is the one relating to the perception of the state of inter-community relations in the Sadar Bazar area during the preceding five years. Our question was: 'How have been Hindu-Muslim relations in this area during the past five years? Good, bad, or indifferent? Since this was a closed question, the answers of our respondents are presentable in a tabulated form (Table 20).

Of the whole sample, half thought that the relations between Hindus and Muslims in the preceding five years were 'indifferent'. Both Hindu and Muslim elites thought they were 'good', but it is the Muslim cross-section who thought that they were in the main 'indifferent'; very few of them thought that they were 'good'.

We could probe this a little further by reference to age and self-assigned class-status. If we divide the respondents in three age classes and tabulate the responses to the question, we got the following results, given in Table 21.

The Table brings out the fact that more of those below 40 years of age in 1974 thought that Hindu-Muslim relations were either bad or indifferent than those of 41 and above. It is a cause for concern that 68.41 per cent of the respondents believed that Hindu-Muslim relations were not good in the areas in which they lived.

Table 22 gives responses by self-assigned class status, stratified in three categories—high, middle, low. (The numbers of respondents falling in each of these categories were: High-Hindus 7, Muslims 3; Middle-Hindus 59, Muslims 62; Low-Hindus 8, Muslims 25.)

A related question was whether, in their view, Hindus and Muslims entertained sentiments of hostility towards each other, and the extent of it—a great deal, somewhat, very little, or not at all. It has been my experience that direct questions of this sort not only do not put off the respondents but introduce the necessary candour in a discussion of what is an extremely serious concern for the respondents and their community. The replies we got are summarised in Table 23.

There is an interesting and marked discrepancy when Hindu respondents express themselves on Hindu hostility towards Muslims, and their appraisal of the Muslims' hostility towards the Hindus. The same phenomenon obtains when we consider Muslim appraisal of Muslim hostility towards the Hindus and their appraisal of Hindu hostility towards Muslims. Thus 57.89 per cent of the Hindus think that Muslims entertain 'a great deal' of hostility towards Hindus, while

TABLE 24: WHEN DO HINDUS AND MUSLIMS MEET?

Respondents	Code Categories: Occasions											
	Social		Political		Business		Everyday		Don't Meet		Total	
	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent
Hindus	11	14.47	4	5.26	22	28.94	16	21.05	23	30.26	76	100
Muslims	31	41.31	5	3.76	55	41.35	20	15.04	22	16.54	133	100



## ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY

36.84 per cent of them think that Hindus harbour 'a great deal' of hostility towards Muslims. A much smaller proportion of our Muslim respondents (12.03 per cent) think that Muslims harbour 'a great deal' of hostility towards Hindus, but many more (32.33 per cent) believe that Hindus do so towards them. Some measure of hostility towards each other is acknowledged by most of the respondents, though quite clearly each view the other as being more hostile.

Given this picture, we should consider the normal range of interaction between Hindus and Muslims. This was done through a question which asked respondents to tell us on what occasions did they meet with members of the other community. The results are presented in Table 24.

We are now in a position to consider questions relating to the Sadar riot itself. In one of our questions we asked our respondents to give us their explanation of the riot—why did it take place? It was an open ended question and the responses are summarised in the following pages.

## MUSLIM EXPLANATIONS OF THE SADAR RIOT

A shop-keeper (barber), age 30: In this area Muslims had some good business; Hindus had been trying to destroy them for quite sometime, and when they could not defeat them in competition, they organised the riot.

A labourer, age 48: Because of Pakistan-meaning that 99 per cent of the population of Kishanganj is Muslim, and Hindus call it 'little Pakistan'.

A Moazzin, age 55: To give a set back to Muslim business; to destroy Muslims in Sadar Bazar; to frighten them so that they leave this area.

A Shia shop-keeper, age 34: The primary reason for this riot is the upliftment of the Harijans; Harijans consider Muslims to be their enemies, and in a riot they kill Muslims.

A railway employee, age 34: This was the result of religious intolerance; Hindus

do not trust Muslims and Muslims do not trust Hindus; the first thing they want to see is whether a person is a Hindu or a Muslim, not what sort of a person he is, however, good he might be.

A small wire manufacturer, age 38: The main reason is poverty, and non-availability of essentials; when people get exasperated they become quarrelsome, when they are happy they do not quarrel; secondly, Hindu-Muslim enmity; Hindus cannot tolerate so many mosques—that is why the Kishanganj mosque was made a target of attack.

A small shop-keeper, age 32: I don't know. A mob came to my shop shouting 'burn the shop'. I took shelter in a Hindu friend's place, and saw that my shop was looted and burnt.

A small shop-keeper, age 38: This is an old enmity which surfaces on different occasions and excites emotions on both sides.

A BA student, age 23: This riot was started by the gundas, and spread to Hindu and Muslim population; the police acted in a partisan manner and got Muslim property damaged.

An artisan, age 23: It was the work of the Hindus; there was a plan to expel Muslims from this area.

A tailor, age 30: The real reason is the non-wearing of the veil by Hindu girls, Hindu boys teased a Hindu girl, and Muslims saved her, but they were the ones who were attacked—that is how things are.

A welder, age 25: It is an old habit of Hindus; they are always thinking of how to get rid of Muslims from India; they also say that when there is Pakistan for Muslims, why should they be here? This riot is a part of that same chain.

A salesman, age 25: This is a mentality which is now flourishing; the reason is that hearts are not clean; now Hindus must understand that Muslims are inhabitants of this place, and Muslims must understand that they are living in the country of Hindus, where they are in the majority.

A tailor, age 45: The real source of the riot lies elsewhere, namely, in the making of Pakistan and its acceptance by our Congressmen; secondly the Jan Sangh mentality, which is increasing among the Hindus. The trouble started at the cinema where deliberately a girl was teased; she then went to a typing shop and complained that she was teased; the man who runs the shop is a trouble-maker, and he spread the story. Then there was trouble in the shop that sells sugarcane pieces. The gamblers who were gambling there about got into the fray when they heard that a riot had started; they got involved in this way because they saw the police coming, who were shouting 'hit the Muslims', and so they joined in because they thought otherwise they would be arrested for gambling; every Sunday all these people gamble, and Hindus and Muslims both participate.

A binder, age 26: The government and the Congress caused the riot jointly.

A tea-stall owner, age 30: This was a small affair which was turned into a communal riot; there was a conspiracy to destroy the Muslims, but it did not succeed.

A dyer, age 46: Outside elements caused the riot—local people are not like that.

A tire-tube merchant, age 32: The trouble started at the cinema, the RSS people gave it a communal turn.

A shop-keeper, age 45: The riot was part of a scheme, and if we had not defended ourselves there would have been a 'Hiroshima' and 'Nagasaki' here; in truth it is the Congress people who instigate riots. They all have the RSS mentality, but the difference is that these people keep it hidden while the RSS people talk openly; it is true that the riot was the work of the Jan Sangh, but the Congress leaders gave full support.

A shop-keeper, age 45: Hindus do not like to see Muslims in one place. This was a well thought out scheme and these people will do it again; the result will be that Muslims will become guerillas.

TABLE 25: WHAT DO HINDUS/MUSLIMS DO IN THE EVENT OF A RIOT?

TABLE 23. WHAT DO INDIVIDUALS DO?														
Respondents	Code Categories													
	Discuss		Pray		Seek Government-Police Help		Plan Self Protection		Seek the Help of Influentials		Other		Total	
	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent
Hindus	20	26.31	8	10.52	13	17.10	27	35.52	2	2.63	6	7.89	76	100
Muslims	18	13.53	69	51.87	13	9.77	6	4.51	8	6.01	19	14.28	133	100



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A political worker, age 59: The riot was the result of police incompetence.

#### HINDU EXPLANATIONS OF THE SADAR RIOT

Our Hindu interviews, by comparison, are far less interesting, and produce standard responses, asserting that the riot was the work of the gundas, or that it was a consequence of earlier troubles, or that they did not know the cause of the riot. There were strong references to trouble over girl-teasing, the role of the political parties, pre-planning by Muslims, work of communal elements; that it was a diversionary act, due to election politics; a conspiracy of the capitalists; and interference by political parties; some quarrel among shop-keepers which assumed the shape of a communal riot; selfish pursuit behind the shield of religion.

The analysis of the responses shows that (a) the Hindus had not been much affected by the Sadar riot and despite the killing of 9 Hindus in the firing (assured to be by Muslims) had made no effort to formulate any understanding of the causes of the riot. The Muslim responses, on the other hand, reflect both a great concern and an attempt to construct some rationale for the riot. The rationale assumes that Hindus are hostile to Muslims, that they will do anything to hurt Muslims materially, and that the authorities are collaborators with the Hindus in this type of activity.

A communal riot is an event that envelope the entire community, not only in the directly affected areas, but over a much broader region, and is thus an occasion for the expression of community solidarity. This takes the form of statements of concern for the people affected, demands on the authority that protection be given to them, denunciation of the perpetrators of violence, and collection of funds and articles for relief. In the affected areas the immediate manifestation of solidarity takes the form of anxious consultation, especially among the leading elements of each community. They are an index of *communitas*. We tried to identify the extent of it by asking

our respondents whether people consulted among themselves when a riot occurred. Among the Muslims 53.48 per cent of the area respondents told us that no consultations were held by Muslims, while 34.23 per cent said that consultations did take place; 11.62 per cent did not know if they did or did not. Among the Hindus over 60 per cent of the respondents reported that consultations did take place, while 15.87 per cent that they did not, and 23.80 per cent did not know. From these data it is obvious that consultations do take place, but not all are aware of it, and this applies especially to women. One inference from our data would seem to be that there is perhaps a relatively greater degree of *communitas* among the Hindus of Sadar Bazar than among the Muslims.

#### IMPACT AND EFFECT OF RIOT

What do people actually do in the event of a riot? That was the question we asked our Hindu and Muslim respondents. Their answers tabulated in six categories are presented in Table 25.

The Table reveals remarkable passivity on the part of Muslims, despite known acts of violence in the May riot. One obvious consequence of the riot was to enhance suspicion between the Hindus and the Muslims; the other was to increase alienation between the Hindus and the administration; the third was the disruption of the economic life of the area, and the impoverishment of a large number of families. We asked our respondents to tell us what impact the riot had more generally and more specifically on Hindus and Muslims. The Muslim appraisal of the consequences of riots reflected strong emotion, anxiety and resentment. Their responses are summarised below:

#### MUSLIM APPRAISAL

Muslims have received a set back in the economic field for a few years; whatever contacts had been established between Hindus and Muslims have been destroyed, and they now look upon each other with suspicion; the Hindus knew well when and where the riot was going to take place, and therefore they had made full preparations

to protect themselves; they did suffer some loss of life, as did the Muslims; but Hindus did not suffer material losses, which only Muslims did. Muslims used to feel insecure—now they do even more so because upto now the administration has only frightened the Muslims.

Hindus are pleased because Muslims suffered losses. Muslims became frightened and have started thinking of self-defence.

The police got bribes. Some parties have appropriated relief funds. Prices have risen. Muslims lost businesses. They are frightened, but have begun to think that they must become united and take steps (to protect themselves); relations among Muslims have improved to some extent. Hindus have begun to think that Muslims are also strong.

The Hindus are very agitated over the resistance offered by the Muslims, and are therefore preparing for a big riot; Muslims have become united, fearless.

There is a tension in the area; all, let they be Hindus or Muslims, are bothered.

Very adverse effect on Muslim businesses. Hindus get the sleep of ease; Muslims have been destroyed—many factories and houses have been burnt.

Riot makes Muslims communal-minded.

People have become more religious, now, along with earning a living, people have started thinking of defence, especially the Muslims.

Those who were arrested have been ruined. There has been no loss to the Hindus. Many Muslims started thinking of leaving India.

Impact on business. Those Muslims who did not suffer in the riot found that afterwards they could not do business with the Hindus.

I only know that my business has been reduced to half. My dealings were mainly with the Hindus. On account of the riot they now don't come here and don't place orders (with us). No one knows how many such cases must be.

Danger of further conflict. Now both Hindus and Muslims have started keeping some weapons in their houses. Because more Hindus were killed in this riot they are thinking of taking revenge. Muslims have lost confidence in the government.

Everyone had become afraid for his life, and has become suspicious of others. What impact can a riot have on the Hindus? Even if they suffer, their people make up the loss. Muslims have become anxious for life and property, and have begun to think of leaving (the area).

The poor suffered hunger; there was no

TABLE 26: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE SECULARISTS?

	Useful				Useless			
	Hindus		Muslims		Hindus		Muslims	
	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent	No	Per Cent
Secularists among Muslims	59	77.63	55	41.35	17	22.36	78	58.64
Secularists among Hindus	59	77.63	81	60.90	17	22.36	52	39.09



milk even for children; businessmen suffered heavy losses; the business of the butchers was completely closed for 10-15 days. The police discriminated against Muslims during the curfew.

My work stopped, had to go hungry for three days. Many good Hindus and Muslims have suffered distress. It is the poor Hindus and poor Muslims who have suffered on account of the riot.

The riot showed to the Muslims that even now we are not safe in this country. Hindus suffered no loss, but it is said that the people they brought over from Meerut to fight here are dissatisfied with the local Hindus because they did not get adequate compensation and are now thinking of taking revenge. Muslims have been strengthened in their faith, and are firm in the belief that only Allah can protect them.

Both Hindus and Muslims suffered loss of trade; thousands of men lost work, and labourers had to go hungry. The main thing is that the plan of the Hindus did not succeed, and even now in Kishanganj and Sadar-Bazar area Muslims have survived well and are pursuing their trades and businesses.

The government was exposed; our police never wants to act in time.

Mutual dislike between Hindus and Muslims has greatly increased. It has had a great impact on the Hindus—they now know that Muslims are not a weak community; all their plans have failed. They had made full preparations, and the police was with them; but we fought them even without weapons, and showed no weakness after the riot; this has made a great impression on the hearts of the Hindus. The Congress-Muslims have also started criticising the Congress leaders; Muslims have lost confidence in the police and the administration.

Hearts got poisoned. They were not clear earlier either, but this riot has worsened the condition. There was some peculiar atmosphere in Delhi, but that has been destroyed by all this.

Feeling of enmity between Hindus and Muslims. There is a propaganda among Hindus that Muslims used fire-arms against Hindus and that this was improper. The truth is that these people wanted to destroy all the Muslim businesses in the area. After this riot Muslims are depressed. They say they had to resort to firing in order to save their lives and property. Despite this the right of self-defence has been taken away from them.

#### HINDU RESPONSE

The Hindu responses have been

qualitatively poor. They mentioned 'loss of life and property', as the general consequence of the May riot. Some also spoke of social consequences, e.g., 'relations have stopped coming into the area, and people have started thinking of changing houses (i.e. moving out of the area)'. Some also spoke of increase in tension, that 'the real mentality came to the forefront' and also 'the old relationships broke up'.

The last series of questions to be considered for this report relate to our respondents' views on what ought to be done to prevent communal violence. In one question we asked what should be done to prevent communal riots generally and in another question we asked what should be done to the same end in the Sadar Bazar area. Responses to both these sets of questions are merged in what follows because our respondents often did so themselves.

#### MUSLIMS RESPONDENTS' IDEAS ON WHAT OUGHT TO BE DONE TO PREVENT COMMUNAL RIOTS

In my view Muslims feel that they are always under a threat, and that Hindus do not consider them Indians. If government provided employment to Muslims in the administration, this feeling will diminish and communal conflicts will also decline. Muslims should try to enter all the political parties; this way they will get in to those parties which instigate riots, and they will not then be able to do so. Jan Sangh-Hindus will never want to see the end to communal riots. Other Hindus should establish good contacts with Muslims; they should consider Muslims as their fellow-countrymen.

All Muslims must support the Jamaat-e-Islami. Hindus should befriend Muslims. There should be good police arrangements.

Hindus and Muslims must live together; remove jealousy; do their own work in peace. Muslims should join the Jan Sangh; must not be misled by the secularists; Hindus should be instructed in Mahatma Gandhi's politics. The government must assume responsibility for the protection of Muslims. Muslims must strengthen the Islamic sentiment.

The government must treat the Muslims well; India must not be viewed as a Hindu country. Muslims should live together, break off relations with the Hindus. Muslims should be recruited into the police.

People must become secular, separate politics and religion; Muslims ought to keep away from communal parties.

Muslims should get united; Muslims

should be recruited into the police and the army so that they are able to defend themselves. Hindus must stop charging Muslims with disloyalty.

Muslims must boycott the Muslim League. There should be a ban on communal organisations. Hindus should subscribe to secular ideology.

If Muslims follow Islam they will automatically become good, and then Hindus won't have the courage to lift their eyes towards Muslims. Muslims should turn a blind eye to Hindu narrow-mindedness. Hindus should look upon Muslims as equal.

What can the Muslims do? They are backward in every sphere. Government should strengthen the CID.

Muslims should not look up to Pakistan and other Muslim countries; instead they should think of Muslims of their own country; government must protect Muslims.

It is not easy to stop riots. Muslims must build their character. It is the government's responsibility to protect them. Hindus should help in removing communalism; at least in business dealings there should be no communalism.

Hindus and Muslims should be settled in separate areas; if there is less contact, friendship might develop; Muslims should defend themselves.

The difference between rich and poor should be abolished, and everyone should be given work.

Hindus and Muslims must develop a common mentality; they should have equal rights according to the Constitution; unless there is a common law, quarrels like this will continue.

People from congested area should be dispersed; riots occur mainly in congested areas. Narrow mindedness should be eliminated; people should live in friendship with other communities, but in the event of a confrontation Muslims must not retreat from self-defence. In the police and the army Hindus and Muslims should be recruited in equal proportions; punish the guilty.

Improve education; increase interaction (between Hindus and Muslims).

Muslims should leave Hindu areas where there is always danger in life; they must discharge their own duty. There should be more police in the area.

Muslims should progress by working with other communities; they should live in other, far away areas; cultivate friendship with Hindus.

Muslims should pray five times.

Where Hindus and Muslims live together, there should be more CID to keep a close watch on the situation; small in-



cidents should be amicably resolved; in the police there should be Hindu officers over Muslim police and Muslim officers over Hindu police.

Government should find a solution. Such a powerful government that can fight Pakistan and China can't control the masses of this country! Muslims should separate themselves from politics and attend to the improvement of their own conditions; they should acquire capacity to beat up, avoid quarrels.

Muslims do not want to make trouble because these are the times when 'one who has the stick claims the buffalo'; they should co-operate with the administration.

Muslims should not be viewed as a minority, but the second majority; they must get their Constitutional rights. But the government is involved in these riots and it wants the Muslims to remain depressed, and support the Congress out of necessity.

There should be no communalism in textbooks. Both Hindus and Muslims should avoid hurting each other's sentiments.

Muslims should unite on a common platform, acquire political awareness, be politic in dealing with the Hindus; Muslims should get representation in the police, the military and the administration in proportion to their share in the population.

Jan Sangh, Muslim League, RSS must go. The government should stop its interference. Congress must be defeated. Muslims should give their votes to the Communist Party. As long as conditions are bad there will be no riots; when conditions improve there will be riots.

Muslims must protect themselves from communal propaganda; they should work as a pressure group in every political party, and take active part in national matters; Hindus should take upon themselves the responsibility of protecting the Muslims and create confidence in them.

It is necessary that there should be 25 per cent Muslims in the police and the army; there should also be a Muslim women's police force so that veiled women are not outraged. Lists of persons living in the midst of the majority should be made and the majority charged with the responsibility of protecting them; should they suffer, they should be compensated by imposing a fine on the majority. There is a section among the Hindus which is angry with the Muslims because they made Pakistan, dividing the country into two, and those who stayed behind have not joined the national mainstream, so much so that some Jan Sanghis insist that Muslims should adopt wholly Hindu customs and manners, and if they do not do so they should be for-

cibly expelled from India and settled in some other country.

In areas where Muslims are in small numbers there should be Muslim police officers. History must be presented in a right manner. Muslims can't do anything. Instead of thinking in terms of Hindus and Muslims, it should be considered that if a 15 per cent section of the population, i.e., Muslims, were to be made backward that would be a great economic loss to the country because neither can such a large population be killed nor can it be sent to Pakistan; if they have to live here then why not live in friendship? so that the country may progress.

#### HINDU RESPONDENTS' IDEAS ON WHAT OUGHT TO BE DONE TO PREVENT RIOTS

People are distracted by unemployment, high prices, etc; military rule is the only remedy. Hindus and Muslims should live together peacefully; all should obey the law.

Strict measures by the administration are necessary; there is frustration; necessities are not satisfied; there is no housing; there must be a law of family planning.

Muslims must cultivate national feeling.

Improve education provide employment.

There should be no discrimination; people should learn to live together.

Muslim isolation in an area should be broken; then there will be friendship between Hindus and Muslims and the problem will disappear.

Instruction in secularism should be provided.

Eliminate gundaism; provide education and work—that will end gundaism.

Participate in each other's festivals.

Impart education that would create national awareness.

Politicians start these troubles for their own ends; people can't make sense of them.

Punish the gundas; make proper use of education; misunderstanding caused in the name of truth, not religion, should be removed.

Military rule.

Since my ideas do not agree with them (government), I can't make suggestions; Muslims should prevent the entry of political parties in these matters; Hindus should keep away from political parties.

Firmness is necessary; when there is fear there will be no riots.

Muslims should go to Pakistan.

Religion-based ideas should be abolished; end casteism and impart instruction in nationalism. Muslims should reform themselves.

Muslims should not go along with com-

munal elements, and should not bring religion into everything.

The troubles are caused by gundaism; ordinary people have no time to spare from their toil. Muslims must understand that this is their own country; not get excited by the gundas.

Muslims should be Indianised.

Congestion is the cause of the trouble. If there was a more open atmosphere, more spacious houses, quarrels will disappear. Muslims should cultivate the spirit of nationalism and eliminate religious differences.

In place of the present government there should be a government of the poor. Only the poor class can eliminate communal feeling. Muslims should support the Communist parties instead of the Congress.

Muslims should feel that no party is against them; government should be impartial and alert; Muslims should acquire nationalist feeling, should regard India as their country.

DIR (Defence of India Rules) should be applied.

Build a secular society.

End the capitalism system.

People should be made to understand that all men are one and that differences of religion, caste, etc, are created by a few like Tata, Birla, etc, for their own advantage; communal organisations like Jan Sangh, Jinnat-e-Islam, Hindu Maha Sabha, Muslim League should be destroyed. Muslim should regard this country and other people in it as their own; give up the idea of high and low.

Muslims should pay attention to their own economic progress.

Hindus should accept Muslims as their brothers.

Government should stop discrimination.

Expel the Muslims, reply brick with stone.

Hindus should not have much to do with Muslims.

All parties of Muslims give encouragement to gundas, Muslims should look upon Hindus as their brothers; Hindus should forget what has happened.

Muslims should not eat meat and respect the Hindus; government must protect both the communities; remove Muslims from this locality (i.e. Kishanganj/Sadar Bazar).

#### GENERAL INFERENCES

If one were to draw some general inferences from these extraordinary statements one would say that Muslim responses to our questions on what should be done to prevent riots reflect despair, while Hindu responses express a strong feeling that Muslims are lacking in national sentiment. There are several points of views represented here; among the



Muslims there is the extreme political position formulated by the Muslim League respondent that Muslims should be treated as the 'second majority', among the Hindus its counterpart, voiced by a housewife; that Muslims be expelled. But these extremes are few and far between. The vast majority of respondents seek accommodation and mutual goodwill. Among the Muslims self-reliance in community's defence is far outweighed by resignation and the demand that government should protect them. There have been resentful responses, accusations that government instigates the riots, and Hindus enjoy the misfortunes of Muslims. But these are few. There are a few. There are a few practical suggestions, regarding reducing over-crowding, education, etc, but not many, and not specific enough. Different partymen, above all those of the Communist parties, have articulated their party's line that communal violence cannot be ended except by putting an end to the capitalist order.

As part of this discussion it might be useful to see the status accorded to secularists among Hindus and Muslims, for they are the people most actively engaged in preventing communal conflict though they are not without their critics. We asked a simple question to our respondents: What did they think of the secularists? Whether they thought them to be 'useful', 'dangerous', or 'useless'? The results are presented in the following Table, collapsing the two categories 'dangerous' and 'useless' into one 'useless'. (See Table 26).

Secularists enjoy a somewhat wider acceptance among the Hindus than they does among the Muslims, though they view Hindu secularists more favourably than the Muslim ones.

### Conclusion

Since the completion of our survey of the communal disturbances in Delhi and their aftermath, the communal situation in India has continued to be a cause for anxious concern to the nation. There has been a second, gruesome riot in Bhiwandi this year, 15 years after the first one in 1949. There have been riots in Jamshedpur, Meerut, Moradabad, Baroda and elsewhere; in Hyderabad there has been a more or less continuous series of communal incidents over the past two or three years. In the south the issue of conversion holds a dangerous potential for communal conflict. I have not included the trouble in Assam and Punjab in this catalogue of violence because the primary issues in these two areas are not communal, though that element is not absent in either case.

One of the most damaging consequences of communal violence is that it

produces anxiety and alienation, not only among those directly affected by the riots but across the whole society, especially the minority community. Nothing undermines the authoritativeness of the state as do the communal riots. Loss of trust in the state, recourse to 'self-protection', emergence of anti-state organisations result in an endless cycle of violence of increasing frequency and ferocity which the state machinery finds it progressively more and more difficult to control. An enfeebled state will give rise to communal violence on a much greater scale than anything we have seen, except during the last phase of dissolution of the British Empire in 1946-47; communal conflict in that context becomes a struggle for power by means of mass violence.

Even though the capacity of the contemporary Indian State to control communal violence is wholly adequate, the signs of alienation are growing, and they should cause concern. In our survey we made use of two questions to measure (a) alienation of Hindus and Muslims from the machinery of the state, and (b) anxiety and desperation felt by the Muslims. In one set of questions we asked our respondents to tell us whether they had any dealings, on any count, with the administration and whether they found the encounter satisfactory. More than 65 per cent of our Hindu respondents and 54 per cent of our Muslim respondents found their encounters with the administration unsatisfactory. And when it came to the protection of Muslims, twice as many Muslim respondents thought that they and their own organisations will have to protect them as did those who looked up to the Central government. To measure the sense of anxiety expressed by Muslims we had asked a straight forward question about the expectations they held for their future. 70 per cent of the Muslim respondents were despondent about it, holding that the conditions of the Muslims will either remain as they are (i.e. bad) or they will deteriorate further; those who thought that they will deteriorate outnumbered those who thought that they will remain as they are. The concerned Muslims felt for themselves and their families, and the alienation they obviously felt from the nation, or even from the Muslim community as a collectivity, was strikingly brought out in responses to a question we asked on the rank-ordering of their own responsibilities towards their own family, community, the state and the nation. 82.70 per cent of our Muslim respondents considered their own family to be their primary responsibility (against 38.15 per cent of the Hindu respondents), while 4.51 per cent chose their community (against zero per cent by Hindu respondents); when it came to the state and the

nation, only 3 per cent of the Muslim respondents gave primacy to the state and 9.77 per cent to the nation; of the Hindu responses 5.26 per cent accorded primacy to the state, and 56.57 per cent to the nation.

Neither 'Indianisation' of Muslims, dear to Hindu communalists, nor religious corporatism, the chosen remedy of the Muslim communalists to the problem of religious diversity, can serve the ends of the nation. The process of integration in India has to be organic, and the degree of unification we should expect to achieve in a vast and diverse population cannot be more than modest by standards of relatively more homogeneous societies. It is necessary to recognise that the political communalism of the pre-independence period is a thing of the past, even if bodies like the Muslim League might aspire to return to it; and although that has not made communal conflict less frequent or less violent, it has ceased to serve political ends. Now communal conflict does not generate community solidarity; it only produces insecurity and ill-will, whatever might be the rhetoric of the communal politician.

The kind of politics that has been practised in India during the last two decades has greatly contributed to the strengthening of communal forces and worsened communal conflict. But it would be an error to think that communalism is a creation of democratic politics, even of our kind. The naive, and somewhat single-minded, Marxism of some of our respondents attributed communal conflict to the conspiracy of the capitalist class, more sophisticated Marxists view it as a structural feature of capitalism in its present phase of development, and make an implicit claim that communal identities will be superseded by the larger class identities as economic development proceeds. This may well happen, though there is no good reason to believe that social formations deriving their cohesion from religion will not continue to play an important role in the lives of the members of the future advanced industrial society of India. That future in any event is, on present reckoning, a distant one. In the present phase of India's development steps have to be taken to provide security to citizens, to protect lives and property, to reduce alienation, promote mutual understanding, and preserve the secular democratic framework, which holds the key to a peaceful resolution of the communal problem.

(Concluded)

### Notes

- 14 Narayan Gupta: "Delhi Between Two Empires 1947-1951", OUP, Delhi 1951
- 15



# THE CANKER OF COMMUNALISM

by RAJENDRA SAREEN

COMMUNALISM has been the most dominant aspect of the 20th century in India. It is a shadow on the freedom struggle and since then continues to foul up the national environment. Its manifestations uprooted millions from their homes in 1947. Its depredations continue to expose many more to a permanent sense of insecurity. The distortions of the communal phenomenon run the gamut of culture, language, religion, social relations, administration, economy and politics, and affect a whole lot of processes involved in the task of nation-building. It is a canker that afflicts society at its most vulnerable points.

The problem is truly elephantine. It tends to diminish the stature of the Indians as human beings. It detracts from the manifold accomplishments of the country in the realm of economy, science and technology. It impairs the country's morale. It is a source of destabilisation and in its acute manifestations is capable of being used as an instrument of foreign intervention in our national affairs.

## QUESTION MARKS

I have often wondered about its precise manifestations and the factors that seem to sustain it in a country which seeks to banish it as a concept. Why can it not be tackled when the law of the land, the Constitution and the political philosophy that guides us are all arrayed against it? Why do people fail a prey to it? How is it able to turn people with a moral code, religious ethics and social values into monsters without compassion or conscience? How is it that the excesses committed under its influence carry conviction with the perpetrators, who talk of faith and self-righteousness? Why is its reach so wide and deadly?

Every facet of it has a number of question marks: Why? How? What?

There are countless questions without adequate answers.

The Chandigarh-based Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (C.R.R.I.D.) tried to explore the various aspects of the problem. It has just concluded a six-week course on "Research Methodology to Study Communalism in India" sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (I.C.S.S.R.). Some leading academicians and intellectuals, besides men of eminence like Mr. P. N. Haksar, Dr. Manmohan Singh and Mr. K. Subrahmanyam, addressed the 25 participants drawn from among researchers and teachers in various universities of the country. The summary of the extensive report is a valuable contribution to the material available on this subject. It is a good starting point for a quest that should be continuous and not episodic.

An attempt has been made to point out the dangers inherent in a "communal" (as distinct from an "objective") understanding of communalism. What is communalism? The answer is: "To believe or to propagate that the socio-economic and political interests of one religious, caste or ascriptive group are dissimilar, divergent and antagonistic to those of another is communalism... Communalism is a false ideology as it reflects the objective reality not inadequately but in a distorted way. For example, there is widespread unemployment. The communalists do not question the causes which generate inadequate opportunities for employment. Instead, they seek reallocation of the available scarce job opportunities along religious, caste or other ascriptive group lines."

Exploring the nexus between communalism and religion, the collective view is that the "communalism" is caused by

religious differences. A religious person is not essentially a communal being. However, over-religious people are prone to communalism. The communalists use religion as an instrument to cement communal monoliths. They ignore, or pretend ignorance about, the common cultural heritage, history and language shared by people which transcend group differences. Antagonism constitutes a crucial element of communalism and is given the moral garb of religion to perpetrate inhuman acts such as looting, rioting, arson and killing. Communalism, in fact, is anti-religion.

It has been pointed out that "communal stereotypes are propagated to feed and fatten religious group identities (communalism). The communal stereotypes prevalent among various sections of one religious group are often contested by some sections belonging to the religious group perceived to be antagonistic. For example, the Muslim communalists frequently accuse the Hindus of being communal and brutal towards the minorities. The Hindu communalists strongly protest against such accusations and try to project themselves as magnanimous by propagating that they have 'permitted' large numbers of Muslims to live in India even after Pakistan was 'granted' to them in 1947. On the other hand, the Hindu communalists alleged that the Muslims are hostile to the Hindus and point out that 'Hindus have been eliminated from Pakistan by Muslims'. The communal stereotypes are propagated to create and widen communal cleavages. For example, the Muslim communalists brand the Indian State as a Hindu State. The Hindu communalists accept this and immediately start prescribing a code of conduct for the Muslims. Repeated propagation of such notions reinforces fears and insecurities which, in turn, strengthen Hindu, Muslim and Sikh identities."

## CONTRADICTIONS

From this flow two contradictory views on the ways to overcome communalism. According to one view, religious groups must tolerate one another and work in the right spirit of brotherhood. The other view is that the members of antagonistic religious groups must be expatriated or eliminated. The widespread sympathy for the communalists and communal voters is one of the consequences of this approach. The activities of terrorists and the flight of panic-stricken residents from Punjab (read Hindus) constitute another consequence of the belief in the idea that elimination and expatriation will somehow solve the problem.

According to the report, "the anti-colonial liberation movement was not communal. The leaders of this movement did not mobilise Indians as Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs against the British who were mostly Christians. However, the anti-colonial liberation movement had an insufficient comprehension of secularism."

"The leaders made alliances with communalists such as the Lucknow Pact with the Muslim League and the Poona Pact with the representatives of what were then called the 'depressed classes' (present-day Scheduled Castes). Besides, minor concessions were often made to the communalists by the forces in the mainstream of the liberation movement on the understanding that the denial of such concessions would inflame communalism."

"History has proved the reverse: the concessions given to the communalists had inflamed the intensity and the appeal of communalism, and the freedom

struggle, communalism receded with the growth of nationalism. Communalism is, therefore, an outcome of the failure by the State to inculcate national consciousness in independent India."

The general view that emerged from the discussions was that "on the attainment of Independence the approach of the ruling elite to communalism was faulty. It was thought that technological and economic development would automatically subsume retrogressive tendencies like parochialism, regional chauvinism, communalism, etc. It was also thought that 'age-old developments' would lead ultimately to the emergence of a new kind of socio-economic groupings and identities, undercutting bases upon which communal (caste, religious, tribal and racial) politics rests."

"It was believed that communal particularism would be submerged by the universalistic character of the market forces. What is happening is just the opposite. Industrialised towns like Jamshedpur, Ahmedabad, Vadodra, Thane, Bhiwandi, Bombay, Hyderabad, Delhi, Kanpur and Rourkela have witnessed continuous and brutal communal riotings."

## CASE IN POINT

It was noted that "agriculturally developed Punjab and the backward tracts of Orissa, Bihar, Assam, West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Tripura, etc. were racked by conflicts stemming from linguistic, regional, casteist and religious chauvinism. All these facts question the validity of over-emphasis on growth rates, per capita income and the like."

Some scholars denied the contention that India was a communal State. They drew the attention of the participants to the distinction between Lebanon, which is a communal State, and India, which is a weak secular State.

India's Constitution does not regard society as an entity organised on religious, caste or other ascriptive group lines. Therefore, in the liberal tradition, the Constitution guarantees certain rights to all the citizens of India irrespective of religion, caste, sex, etc.

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(i) ascriptive groups have a rate and antagonistic socio-economic interests, and

(ii) these interests can only be safeguarded or achieved by organising them in the political sphere along religious, caste or other ascriptive lines.

The report says that certain recent events in contemporary history show how dangerous this approach is. "Sikh communalists killed innocent members of Hindu religious groups into disowning the Punjabi language, and Hindu communalists harassed innocent believers in Sikhism outside Punjab. And the same communalists repeatedly propagated that Hindi was the language of the Hindus and Punjabi belonged to the Sikhs. The pro-Hindi section viewed the demand for linguistic demarcation of Punjab by the Sikh communalists as an attempt to create a theocratic State. Some of the Sikh communalists owned this. And this, in turn, hardened communal attitudes and transformed demagoguery into a grave crisis. The net outcome of this confrontation was a flare-up between the communal-

ist groups at the cost of several innocent lives."

The Akali Dal, it was pointed out, as a political party, was an offshoot of the Akali movement of the twenties, which was a religious reform movement aimed at ending corruption in places of worship. The Akali Dal, on the other hand, was a political party which became communal by shouting "Sikhism is in danger", and by propagating the concept of a common Sikh culture. This fact shows that the Akali Dal is desirous of seeking a communal solution to social, economic and political problems.

There are, however, two points on which I wish to join issue with the learned men who deliberated on the matter. The first point concerns the fallacious argument advanced on a communal basis about the choice by Maulana Azad of his constituency. He contested the Lok Sabha election from Rampur in 1952 not because it was a Muslim-majority constituency but because Col B. H. Zaidi prevailed on him to leave the ruling family from a fraternal contest. In 1957, the Maulana contested from Gurgaon because of its proximity to Delhi. Neither of these was a Muslim-majority constituency, although both had a large Muslim component. In fact, after Maulana Azad's death the Gurgaon seat was won by Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri. It shows a very poor understanding of the political realities of the time to say that Maulana Azad would not have won from a Hindu-majority constituency or that he chose his constituencies on communal considerations. It is forgotten that Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who perhaps the only Muslim voter in a predominantly refugee constituency in Ambala in 1952 and that he won with a large margin.

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The whole assumption is naive. The original draft of the Anandpur Sahib resolution is plainly secessionist. But Mr. Rajiv Gandhi would have achieved nothing by rubbing this point in or refusing to conclude the Punjab accord once Sant Harchand Singh Longowal had agreed to refer it to the Sarkaria Commission in so far as related to Centre-State relations.

There are three main points to be noted. World War II (for its neglect) is that despite loss of life and property in communal holocausts, vast multitudes continue to live together in amity all over the country.

Of greater relevance to Punjab is the third omission relating to the hardly remembered phenomenon of the Arya Samaj-Sanatanist conflicts during the thirties which were invariably bitter and frequently violent. The two did not intermarry whereas Sanatanists and Sikhs did.

All in all, the C.R.R.I.D. has made a very commendable effort. All communal organisations are prolific in coming out with published material whereas the secular point of view remains woefully ignored in this respect. It still does not add up to an adequate profile of the phenomenon of communalism. It is a good start. However, a vast area will have to be traversed before the country is able to come to grips with this ominous problem in its myriad manifestations.



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There are three substantive omissions. There is no reference in the summary report to the miraculous scenes of Hindu-Muslim conviviality after World War I. The second aspect that is conspicuous (for its neglect) is that despite the loss of life and property in communal holocausts, vast multitudes continue to live together in amity all over the country.

Of greater relevance to Punjab is the third omission relating to the hardly remembered phenomenon of the Arya Samajist-Sanatani conflicts during the thirties which were invariably bitter and frequently violent. The two did not intermarry whereas Sanatanists and Sikhs did.

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# FALLOUT OF COMMUNAL DIVIDE

by RAJENDRA SAREEN

THE turbulence in Punjab politics emanates from the Akalis' quest for power. If the Bama Government falls, it will not be as a result of a "conspiracy" of the Centre but as that of the injured ego of the new spokesman of Sikh chauvinism, Mr Parkash Singh Badal.

It is perfectly legitimate for the Akalis to seek power, but then they cannot shirk their responsibility to evolve a basis for that within the parameters of the political system and the Constitution. Nor can they hope to retain power unless they observe the rules of the game in so far as well as in relation to others. Any attempt to subvert or circumvent the basic requirements of the political game is bound to evoke resistance and, if the matters are taken beyond a certain point, invite retribution.

The Akalis' proclivity to arrogate to themselves a larger than life dimension in the politics of Punjab runs into a dead end, for two reasons. On the few occasions they have succeeded in capturing power, their factional fighting has asserted itself in full measure. In the pursuit of conflict, they do not observe any restraint.

The ability of the Sikhs to play a dominant role in Punjab politics requires a coalition such as the Akalis had with the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. In the alternative, the Sikhs veer round to a secular party like the Congress as was the case until 1962. Even a 20 per cent shift in the Sikh vote can make the Congress win.

## COALITIONS

In the 1952, 1957 and 1962 elections, a larger number of Sikhs, contesting on the Congress ticket, got elected than was warranted by the community's numerical strength in the State. The Akalis put up a very poor show in these three elections. In 1967, it was a stalemate and the Akalis could capture power only in coalition with the Jana Sangh. In 1968, the Akali-Jana Sangh coalition contested the polls jointly and the Akalis were able to emerge as the largest single party. In 1971, on the other hand, when the Akali coalition with the Jana Sangh broke down, the Congress won a clear majority. In 1977, the Akali-Jana Sangh coalition swept the polls, leaving the Congress way behind. But the position was reversed in 1980, when the Congress emerged as the governing party.

It was only in September, 1985, and even then because of the extraordinary situation arising in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star, that the Akalis were able to win 73 of the 117 seats single-handedly against all other parties. However, after this massive win, the personality clashes among the Akalis split the party right through the middle.

There should be no doubt that the Akali desire to rule Punjab on its own, without adjustment or accommodation with other political factors, is unlikely to be fulfilled again in the foreseeable future. Nor is it realistic for the Akalis to expect that they can rule the State without evolving an effective framework for the participation of the Hindus, who constitute anything between 40 and 45 per cent of the population.

## PUNJABI SUBA

The experience of Akali-Jana Sangh coalitions during the past two decades has been that the arrangement operates to the advantage of the Akalis but serves to limit the Jana Sangh (now Bharatiya Janata Party - B.J.P.) prospects. The B.J.P. has invariably played a highly constructive and responsible role in curbing the process of communal polarisation in Punjab. In their view of things, the Hindus are not separate from the Sikhs. But the B.J.P. is unable to exercise any restraint on the factional fight among the Akalis or on their proclivity to subordinate the interests of the State as well as those of their coalition partner to the exigencies of their factional politics. Therefore, it is doubtful if the Hindu vote will swing in any big way in favour of a B.J.P.-Akali coalition.

In this connection, it is pertinent to recall that in 1965 when the demand for Punjabi Suba was revived, the Punjab Government document examining the matter pointed out:

"In dealing with the problem posed by the Akalis, it is necessary to understand that the real motivation for it is a desire for power... Since a Punjabi Suba is sought, albeit implicitly, as a means of capturing power which in the face of political realities may not materialise, the creation of a Suba will not mean an end of the trouble by the Akalis for achieving their ends.

"Unfortunately, the thought processes of the Akalis are still conditioned by medieval concepts, thinking in terms of political power wielded by religious or domonational communities. They have yet to become conscious of the impossibility of those concepts in relation to the present-day political realities. They seem to be deluding themselves that they will find a way of getting over the system of political majority by wielding power on the basis of joint electorates. The emphasis in their discussions and even public pronouncements is that the Hindus have got Hindustan, and the Muslims have got Pakistan, so the Sikhs must get Punjabi Suba.

"It is, therefore, absolutely certain that the next focus of their attack will be the very concept of secular nationalism as the basis of the Constitution and the system of joint electorates. This attack will inevitably derive strength from the realities of political frustration, economic hardships and strained communal relations which will be the 'necessary' concomitants of Punjabi Suba. The State Government views such a contingency with grave anxiety because its experience is that the Akali leadership is totally devoid of any sense of proportion while engaged in whipping up mass hysteria to avenge its thwarted ambitions. The tone and temper of its pronouncements has always been highly provocative and inflammable.

"It will thus be seen that the expectation that the Akalis as a communal political force would vanish from the Punjab scene on the formation of Punjabi Suba is a fallacy arising out of wishful thinking and glossing over the hard facts. Therefore, the State Government would like to emphasise that conceding the Akali demand would solve no problem and instead is bound to create fresh complications."

## LOOSE ENDS

It is a painful story how the national leadership because of its political ineptitude mishandled the situation at that time to such an extent that a ghost which had been laid to rest by Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Partap Singh Kairon came alive again. By the time Indira Gandhi came on the scene in January, 1966, it was all over bar the shouting. Be that as it may, it is worth remembering that the Punjabi Suba demand was formally conceded by Indira Gandhi. The Akali leaders of those times could not make up their minds as to whether they wanted a larger Punjab with a marginal numerical majority of the Hindus or a smaller Punjab with a Sikh majority. In the event, many loose ends were left around, which over the time have got tangled into knots. The Indian nation as well as the people of Punjab, both the Hindus and the Sikhs, have to pay the price for that today. But the reorganisation of Punjab today is a settled fact.

Punjab and the Punjabis have become hostages to a series of acts of omission and commission on the part of political leaders. Then there are any number of grievances both the Hindus and the Sikhs have against each other. For some years now a cause-and-effect sequence has developed so that it becomes difficult to pinpoint when a grievance of one turns into the cause of the other's grievance. Not all these

are rooted in fact and reality even though quite a few of them are. But the passion with which both communities are ready to believe the very worst of each other is a problem in itself. The Punjabis, in fact, have gone far beyond the point where any useful purpose will be served by trying to determine who is wrong or how he is wrong, and on what. The psychiatrists' couch is utterly irrelevant. It is a now-or-never, do-or-die situation.

## MENTAL BLOCK

There is an impenetrable wall of misunderstanding around what the dissident Akalis project as the "wounded Sikh pride". This is not confined to disgruntled politicians, but is a widely shared perception and will have to be taken seriously. There is a legitimate aspect to it. The trauma of Operation Blue Star has understandably left a deep impact on the minds and hearts of the Sikhs. But the mental block that comes in the way of seeing the other facets of that tragedy is incomprehensible to the non-Sikhs.

The Bhindranwale phenomenon, with all that accompanied it from 1981 to 1984, cannot be wished away as a non-event. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, Operation Blue Star, Indira Gandhi's assassination and the anti-Sikh holocaust in Delhi and other cities have inflicted indelible scars on the psyche of both the Hindus and the Sikhs of Punjab. There have been numerous events and developments before, after and between the major ones. Among these are the spate of murders by the Bhindranwale men, the attempt to mobilise ex-servicemen to paralyse the Government in Punjab and sabotage the Asian Games, the indignities heaped on the Sikhs passing through Haryana in November, 1982, the violence let loose against the Sikhs at Panipat and Karnal in 1983, the treatment of the youth by the security forces in the wake of Operation Blue Star, the organisation of terror gangs to restart wanton killings of opponents as well as the innocent, the transistor bombs and bank robberies and, last but not the least, the rise of the "Seras".

All these and much else shall haunt this unfortunate land and stand to its disgrace for a long time. None of these things can be wiped off. The bitter memories will linger for a long time to come.

The administrative and political failures are, of course, responsible for a lot of what has happened. But these cannot by themselves account for all that has happened in Punjab. The people too have contributed by acquiescence, even when they have not connived at and abetted the depredations of the miscreants. The terrorists do

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## Roots of turbulence—II

## FALLOUT OF COMMUNAL DIVIDE

Communalism

by RAJENDRA SAREEN

THE turbulence in Punjab politics emanates from the Akalis' quest for power. If the Banwala Government falls, it will not be as a result of a "conspiracy" of the Centre but as that of the injured ego of the new spokesman of Sikh chauvinism, Mr Parkash Singh Badal.

It is perfectly legitimate for the Akalis to seek power, but then they cannot shirk their responsibility to evolve a basis for that within the parameters of the political system and the Constitution. Nor can they hope to retain power unless they observe the rules of the game inter se as well as in relation to others. Any attempt to subvert or circumvent the basic requirements of the political game is bound to evoke resistance and, if the matter is taken beyond a certain point, invite retribution.

The Akalis' propensity to arrogate to themselves a larger than life dimension in the politics of Punjab runs into a dead end for two reasons. On the few occasions they have succeeded in capturing power, their factional fighting has asserted itself in full measure. In the pursuit of conflict, they do not observe any restraint.

The ability of the Sikhs to play a dominant role in Punjab politics requires a coalition such as the Akalis had with the Bharatiya Jana-Sangh. In the alternative, the Sikhs veer round to a secular party like the Congress as was the case until 1962. Even a 20 per cent shift in the Sikh vote can make the Congress win.

## COALITIONS

In the 1952, 1957 and 1962 elections, a larger number of Sikhs, contesting on the Congress ticket, got elected than was warranted by the community's numerical strength in the State. The Akalis put up a very poor show in these three elections. In 1967, it was a stalemate and the Akalis could capture power only in coalition with the Jana Sangh. In 1968, the Akali-Jana Sangh coalition contested the polls jointly and the Akalis were able to emerge as the largest single party. In 1971, on the other hand, when the Akali coalition with the Jana Sangh broke down, the Congress won a clear majority. In 1977, the Akali-Jana Sangh coalition swept the polls, leaving the Congress way behind. But the position was reversed in 1980, when the Congress emerged as the governing party.

It was only in September, 1985, and even then because of the extraordinary situation arising in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star, that the Akalis were able to win 73 of the 117 seats single-handed against all other parties. However, after this massive win, the personality clashes among the Akalis split the party right through the middle.

There should be no doubt that the Akali desire to rule Punjab on its own, without adjustment or accommodation with other political factors, is unlikely to be fulfilled. Nor is it realistic for the Akalis to expect that they can rule the State without evolving an effective framework for the participation of the Hindus, who constitute anything between 40 and 45 per cent of the population.

## PUNJABI SUBA

The experience of Akali-Jana Sangh coalitions during the past two decades has been that the arrangement operates to the advantage of the Akalis but serves to limit the Jana Sangh (now Bharatiya Janata Party - B.J.P.) prospects. The B.J.P. has invariably played a highly constructive and responsible role in curbing the process of communal polarisation in Punjab. In their view of things, the Hindus are not separate from the Sikhs. But the B.J.P. is unable to exercise any restraint on the factional fighting among the Akalis or on their propensity to subordinate the interests of the State as well as those of their coalition partner to the exigencies of their factional politics. Therefore, it is doubtful if the Hindu vote will swing in any big way in favour of a B.J.P.-Akali coalition.

In this connection, it is pertinent to recall that in 1965 when the demand for Punjabi Suba was revived, the Punjab Government document examining the matter pointed out:

"In dealing with the problem posed by the Akalis, it is necessary to understand that the real motivation for it is a desire for power... Since a Punjabi Suba is sought, albeit implicitly, as a means of capturing power which in the face of political realities may not materialise, the creation of a Suba will not mean an end of the trouble by the Akalis for achieving their ends."

Unfortunately, the thought processes of the Akalis are still conditioned by medieval concepts, thinking in terms of political power wielded by religious or denominational communities. They have yet to become conscious of the impossibility of those concepts in relation to the present-day political realities. They seem to be eluding themselves that they will find a way of getting over the system of political majority by holding power on the basis of joint electorates. The emphasis in their discussions and even public pronouncements is that the Hindus have got Hindustan, the Muslims have got Pakistan, so the Sikhs must get Punjabi Suba.

It is, therefore, absolutely certain that the next focus of their attack will be the very concept of secular nationalism as the basis of the Constitution and the system of joint electorates. This attack will inevitably derive strength from the realities of political frustration, economic hardships and strained communal relations which will be the necessary concomitants of Punjabi Suba. The State Government views such a contingency with grave anxiety because its experience is that the Akali leadership is totally devoid of any sense of proportion while engaged in whipping up mass hysteria to avenge its thwarted ambitions. The tone and temper of its pronouncements has always been highly provocative and inflammable.

It will thus be seen that the expectation that the Akalis as a communal political force would vanish from the Punjab scene on the formation of Punjabi Suba is a fallacy arising out of wishful thinking and glossing over the hard facts. Therefore, the State Government would like to emphasise that conceding the Akali demand would solve no problem and instead is bound to create fresh complications.

## LOOSE ENDS

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## MENTAL BLOCK

There is an impenetrable wall of misunderstanding around what the fabled Akali project as the "wounded Sikh pride". This is not confined to disgruntled politicians, but is a widely shared perception and will have to be taken serious note of. There is a legitimate aspect to it. The trauma of Operation Blue Star has understandably left a deep impact on the minds and hearts of the Sikhs. But the mental block that comes in the way of seeing the other facets of that tragedy is incomprehensible to the non-Sikhs.

The Bhindranwale phenomenon, with all that accompanied it from 1981 to 1984, cannot be wished away as a non-event. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, Operation Blue Star, Indira Gandhi's assassination and the anti-Sikh holocaust in Delhi and other cities have inflicted indelible scars on the psyche of both the Hindus and the Sikhs of Punjab. There have been numerous events and developments before, after and between the major ones. Among these are the spate of murders by the Bhindranwale men, the attempt to mobilise ex-servicemen to paralyse the Government in Punjab and sabotage the Asian Games, the indignities heaped on the Sikhs passing through Haryana in November, 1982, the violence let loose against the Sikhs at Panipat and Karnal in 1983, the treatment of the youth by the security forces in the wake of Operation Blue Star, the organisation of terror gangs to restart wanton killings of opponents as well as the innocent, the transistor bombs and bank robberies and, last but not the least, the rise of the "Senas".

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# Communal divide

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not vanish into thin air after murder and massacre. They take shelter with people in their homes. They are protected and provided for. The police contacts of the terrorists are only another facet of this reality.

So do the Shiv Sainiks with their trishuls operate with popular consent and support. If they have not yet become as murderously effective as the Sikh terrorists, the reason is that they are late starters and have not had the advantage of foreign links for arms supply and training. Given time, they are bound to catch up with their Sikh cousins, and their potential for mischief is going to be as deadly as that of the early starters.

When the Naxalites became active in Punjab at the turn of the seventies, the authorities were able to liquidate them. But for some five years now, the terrorists have been able to operate with impunity. Why? The explanation lies in the sharp distinction between the Naxalites and the contemporary Punjab terrorists. The Naxalites fighting for the have-nots had to contend with the hostility of the haves in each village whereas the terrorists, as religious fanatics, are able to have the population of the villages to either support them actively or stand as passive spectators neutral on their side.

All this is not to denigrate the good sense displayed by the common man in not letting the communal divide go beyond a point. There have been numerous incidents of compassion, courage and sacrifice. But the damage has been caused nevertheless and essentially because evil did not evoke among the masses the repugnance and revulsion that it should have evoked. So, let there be an end to the hypocritical breast-beating about the mischief-makers of the community other than one's own.

There is no running away from the fact that the Hindu-Sikh relations have deteriorated. The traditional ties of social and family relationship are not entirely extinct but the strain is manifest. It is futile to shed tears over what has happened. One wishes it had not happened. It is a matter of anguish that it has come about. But the point is that it really has, and the

sensible thing would be to recognise this for what it is and then proceed to adjust to this painful reality. Bemoaning for a past that has gone into history is unlikely to help. The need is to look to the future.

In a secular society, nothing hinges on whether any two communities are branches of the same tree or distinct and separate from each other. It is no doubt a personal wrench for the mixed families. My father's sister married a Sikh gentleman and my uncle married a Sikh lady. My grandmother knew no scripture other than Guru Granth Sahib. This pattern of relationship is still around. But with all that, the political divide along communal lines is there.

If that is all there is to it, the answer lies in evolving a framework to manage the State's affairs on the basis that the Hindus and Sikhs are distinct and separate from each other. But that cannot, and indeed does not, validate the terrorist programme to annihilate the Hindus. Nor does it provide a basis for the Hindus to start organising a counter force to assault the Sikhs where they are in a minority. All that is a simple matter of the maintenance of law and order and the politicians who interfere with that are as guilty as the men who wield the guns and trishuls.

Proclaiming the murderers as martyrs is not calculated to heal the "wounded pride of the Sikhs". It is an attempt to feed the fostered sense of grievance among the Sikhs in pursuit of petty politics capable of inflicting great damage.

It is terribly perverse to pretend that the past five years have added to the "pride" of the Sikhs. On the contrary, the happenings during this period have served to stigmatise them in public consciousness. This is indefensible and unjustified. Steps must be taken to ensure that the sins of a few do not visit upon the innocent. There is no difficulty in appreciating the anguish caused to the devout Sikhs by police entry into the gurdwaras. But why is there a refusal to uphold the sanctity of the religious places by denying the criminals sanctuary there?

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## Communalism and Regionalism

Balraj Puri

*National interest must certainly be paramount, but a concept of nationalism as a remote mythical entity entrusted with the job of curbing and disciplining sub-national, including minority community, urges would invariably lead to tensions. On the other hand, a symbiotical, and not dichotomous, relation between national and sub-national identities is closer to reality and a surer basis for a harmonious growth of nationalism and its constituent parts.*

THE way bridges between communities—in the form of persons, parties institutions and ideologies—are crumbling and the frequency and intensity of communal troubles are rising portend a frightening scenario. More ominous than the statistics of the number of victims of communal frenzy is the precipitously falling level of mutual tolerance and understanding. The phenomenon called communalism defies not only the political, administrative and intellectual leadership of the country but also a plausible diagnosis and, worse still, a precise description.

What exactly is communalism? The term is a typical Indian contribution to the English language which regards it as a virtue, viz, concern for the interest of the community instead of an individual. But in India, it is a derogatory term used more to malign than define. In fact the term is more suited for a polemical quarrel than for a political dialogue. For nobody accepts this derogatory label. And even as a team of abuse it is far from precise.

The Muslim League in Kerala was often described, for instance, as non-communal by its coalition partners in the state government on the plea that it was different from its namesake in the north that demanded Pakistan. The Akali Dal has claimed—the claim was supported by different parties at one time or the other—that it was not communal on account of its contribution to the freedom movement. The RSS equally forthrightly rejects the communal label and flaunts certificates of eminent secular personalities to substantiate the claim. An official spokesman of the Congress (I), had, for instance, declined to call the RSS as communal during the eighth general elections. Before independence, communalism used to be contrasted with nationalism.

The two terms were differentiated by the priority one attached to one's loyalty to an identity based on a religious community or that on the nation. The terms nationalist muslim and nationalist sikh came into vogue, in this context, to denote persons whose first loyalty was to the latter category.

It is the use of communalism in the post-independence era to distinguish it from and contrast it with secularism that started spreading confusion. For the two terms are really not comparable. While communalism implies identity based on a religious community, secularism does not suggest any specific single alternative basis of identity. It makes sense only as an adjective. Thus all non-religious identities like nation, region, language, tribe, caste, profession and class are secular identities. But in most political discussions communalism is bracketed with other sub-national identities treating all of them as equally parochial, which further blurs the difference between communal and secular approaches.

Again communalism is often sought to be defined as mixing of religion with politics, which many secularists regard as the most pernicious bane of India's public life. In this context, it is somehow completely forgotten that it was Gandhi who used to make the most potent mixture of the two elements. Those who argue that religion and politics should not be mixed, he had said, did not know what religion was.

It may also be recalled that Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah fought his decisive battles against the Muslim League and its slogan of Pakistan from the mosques and shrines of Kashmir. And the anti-British sikh movement, also an ally of the national movement, was based in gurdwaras. Both these movements were hailed as secular by the nationalist leadership.

Many secular liberals have further been arguing that religion should be a matter between an individual and his maker. Its proper place is either the solitude of the house or the church. The naivete of this argument is staggering. To quote Gandhi again, they do not know what religion is.

One need not be a believer in religion much less in what is called communalism to know that it does not consist merely in prayer to god but also covers a set of theological beliefs, rituals and practices which one shares with the community. More than anything religion is a cultural and social entity. Indeed, it is inconceivable without a community. And there cannot be any community without socio-political urges.

The mode of prayer, the concept of god and other religious and spiritual doctrines are rarely the main source of tension between communities these days. When religious communities fight, usually they do so on secular demands, like a share in the economic cake, government jobs, admissions to technical institutions and, above all, political power.

The movement for muslim consolidation stretching over almost a century till its culmination in the partition of the country, reflected growing divergence in the secular claims of various communities rather than any divergence in their religious beliefs. Even the mobilisation of almost the entire tribe of Muslim Ulema by Gandhi, and use of religious rhetoric by them could not divert the attention of the muslim masses from their mundane urges for a role in the economic and political life of the country. An emotive issue like Khilafat, too, could not sway muslim emotions in favour of the Congress for too long. Deoband, one of the premier institutions of Islamic learning in the world and a citadel of what were called nationalist muslims, proved no match to a modern university of Aligarh which became the storm centre of the Pakistan movement.

While pro-Congress muslims used religious sanction and theological arguments to build a case for a composite Indian nationalism, Jinnah's arguments revolved round the identity and status of the muslim community.

Most of the communal disputes of the past and the present can be traced to communal and not religious causes. Take the most explosive current controversies—Ayodhya is a dispute over a piece of land; Ahmedabad riots broke out on the issue of the rathayatra. Personal law was essen-



tially a question of uniformity versus muslim identity; Similarly purely sikh religious demands could not maintain the tempo of the Akali agitation and Indira Gandhi had not much difficulty in conceding most of them. The sikhs have always been more roused about demands like Punjabi Suba, Anandpur Sahib Resolution, territorial disputes like Chandigarh and river waters most of which are not only non-religious but strictly speaking non-sikh also as they are regional.

There are two roles of religion. One is doctrinal; the other is identity formation, i.e., as a community. The entire attention of the secular forces has been diverted to establishing doctrinal harmony between different faiths. Much scholarship has also been devoted to establish the essential unity of all religions. But limitations of what may be called Ram-Pahim approach in resolving the communal tangle should by now be evident. It misses the target and diverts attention away from the real problem namely, the role and status of religious communities in a secular country.

As far as the role of religion as a communal identity is concerned, overemphasis on oneness of all religions proves counter-productive as minorities apprehend in it a threat to their identity and tend to reassert it. Similarities between hindus and sikhs, however, true, have, for instance, no relevance to their relations as communal identities and references to them have become a source of irritation. Communal separatism, it may be recalled, has at least partly been provoked by an urge for uniformity. To respect a religious group because it is the same as our own and not because it is entitled to respect despite being different, has also undermined the spirit of tolerance in the country. Uniformity, intolerance and separatism have thus been feeding one another.

There are numerous other reasons which have sharpened the urge for communal identity; most of them are, again of a secular nature. Modernisation, for instance, is universally known to stimulate a sense of self-awareness among all communities including those based on religion. Revolutionary advances in the means of communication, faster and easy travel and explosion in the mass media shorten physical and mental distances among members of a community scattered all over the country or even the world. Similarly education and easy access to knowledge generally make a community conscious of its historical heritage.

Modernisation thus helps in establishing the geographical and historical continuity of a community. The development process improves material means of its members to enable them to pursue the same objective more effectively. They can visit

religious shrines and congregations more frequently and conveniently. The same trend is further accelerated by measures of politicisation, democratisation and participation.

This, in fact, is a universal phenomenon. Even advanced capitalist countries like the US, Canada and Ireland as well as countries like the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have witnessed a resurgence of ethnic and religious identities in recent years. Their resurgence, on the one hand, and inability of the national elites to understand and accommodate the emerging identities and their sharply articulated urges lead to tensions.

#### NATIONALISM AND HINDUISM

The Indian situation adds a few more complexities. Its most outstanding feature is the unique character of the dominant religion of hinduism which is not comparable to other religions. Hinduism, as Aurobindo said, is Indian nationalism. Its most important deity is Bharat Mata. National epics are its sacred books, national rivers and mountains are its sacred places and national heroes are its gods.

It is very tolerant about beliefs and practices of other religions because there is room for all such beliefs and practices within its own fold. This fact reinforces the view developed earlier that doctrinal differences are not the main source of communal tension in India. However, the peculiar nature of hinduism creates two types of dilemma for other communities. First, they feel threatened more by its assimilative and integrationist character than by its aggressive brand. Second, hinduism as a religionised version of Indian nationalism is as intolerant of deviations from its standard of nationalism as it is tolerant at the theological level.

Hinduism meets other religions not as another religion but as a representative of the ancient and native heritage of the nation and has, in that capacity, apart from strength due to its numbers, acquired the *de facto* right to set requirements and ideals of Indian nationalism.

The hindu attitude towards the other religious communities is thus determined not so much by their religious thought and practices as by its perception of their loyalty to the country. It would not be found wanting in its respect for other religions but would tend to find others wanting in standards of patriotism. This also used to explain the difference between the hindu attitude towards religions of Indian origin and those of foreign origin. On this reasoning, transnational affinities of christians and muslims were supposed to dilute their loyalty to the country. In the context of muslims, India's continued

strained relations with Pakistan which was the outcome of the demand by Indian muslims is used to cast an additional aspersion on their loyalty to the country.

Of late, the sikh urge for a distinct identity and some of its militant manifestations aroused similar apprehensions of hindus about the patriotic credentials of the community. In this case, too, their reverence for sikh gurus scarcely declined but their anger over the 'anti-national' role of the community, took an almost barbaric form in November 1984 in many places.

Nationalism as a form of religion distinguishes the hindus from most of the non-hindu communities. It is their concern for the national unity of their concept that is the principal cause of their reluctance to recognise and respect the urge of minorities for preserving their identity. The attitude of militant hindus towards minorities is supported by many genuine secular nationalists who, in the interest of a strong nationalism, are sceptical about the role of sub-national identities. In a similar way, many liberals including agnostics treat these identities as parochial and hence with contempt. Those marxists who discern anti-west or anti-imperialist potentialities in Indian nationalism, too, find little sympathy for sectional and communal identities, supposed to be encouraged by imperialist powers.

Thus a religious hindu, a nationalist hindu, a liberal hindu and marxist hindu share their scepticism about the identity of religious minorities. Witness their common stand on the issue of Muslim Personal Law. Of course the degree of their scepticism and tolerance varies. Hindu communalism, in this context, is a terminological inexactitude. For it is a form of Indian nationalism. The form, however, matters. Nehru, therefore, defined hindu communalism as Indian version of fascism, which is an extreme form of nationalism.

#### ALIENATION OF MINORITIES

Conflict of hindus with the minorities is neither on the issue of religious matters nor so much on matters of communal interest. Minorities are getting alienated from the dominant concept of nationalism. To treat the minority communalism and the majority communalism as two sides of the same coin is not correct even historically. For Jinnah and Muslim League had reacted to Gandhi, the symbol of Indian nationalism and not to Savarkar or Golwalkar, who were non-entities at that time. Since then Indian nationalism has moved further away from Gandhian universality and tolerance.



Further, minorities are tending to get alienated from the system. The then chief justice Chandrachud's *obiter dicta*, unrelated to the merit of the issue of maintenance to women under the Muslim Personal Law, Calcutta High Court's patently illegal admission of a writ petition for banning the Quran and the fate of the 38-year-old temple-mosque dispute in Ayodhya pending in the courts are cited by many Muslims as reasons for their disillusionment with the judicial system.

Similarly the Shah commission's verdict on Chandigarh in 1966 and that of three commissions last year on the same subject and of the Mishra commission on the anti-sikh riots of November 1984 have cumulatively shaken the faith of the Sikh community in the institution of the judicial commissions.

Decline in the credibility of the police, the administrative set up, recruitment agencies, the election system and other institutions aggravate the sense of alienation of the people, in particular, the minorities. With the decline of party system and centralisation of the polity, chances of getting qualitative and quantitative representation by all communities through normal democratic processes are becoming less. The erosion of democratic values and institutions further deprives people of a sense of participation.

The system in which a simple majority of seats—even with minority votes—on which liberal democracy is based is suitable for homogeneous societies. Otherwise it might lead to domination of one community over the other, which is negation of the spirit of democracy and causes tensions among communities.

In Punjab, a coalition of Hindus and Sikh scheduled caste represented by the Congress had kept the Akali Dal, representing the mainstream of the Sikh community, out of power for so long, to be followed by return to power of a purely Sikh party. The sense of powerlessness and frustration, suffered by the two communities alternately, alienated them from the system and each other with consequences too well known to be recounted.

The question of inter-communal relations cannot be resolved by not taking cognisance of communal identities, by declaring them to be 'false consciousness', or by sermons on virtues of national identity against communal identities. Instead of evading the question, it must be faced by considering systemic innovations—constitutional, institutional and conventional—to ensure a sense of participation to all communities, by evolving a dynamic and adequate concept of nationalism capable of inspiring and satisfying all sections of the people and by debating the

spheres and autonomy of religion based identities.

#### PLURALITY OF IDENTITIES

When a community perceives a threat to its identity and develops a siege mentality or its passions are aroused to a hysterical pitch, it tends to become monolithic and exclusive and acquires what are called fundamentalist characteristics. But if its urge for identity is conceded and it remains in a normal and healthy state, it is bound to be diversified on the basis of, say, class, ideology and region.

Apart from an urge for a community identity, every member of it has plurality of identities, which must be satisfied for its collective interest. If communal loyalties stand in the way of members of a community in, say, the formation of trade unions or professional associations, their freedom to choose between different political approaches and development of their culture, as a whole would be impoverished.

The three types of identities, viz, based on class, ideology and culture or region are instances of secular identities which members of every religious identity must share with others in their own interest. Delimitation of the spheres of religious and secular identities can thus be done by voluntary effort of the people in pursuit of their enlightened self-interest.

Region is, of course, the most powerful secular identity. It represents a community which broadly shares a common language, culture, ethnicity and neighbourhood. Regional identities are a reality of Indian polity. But whether they are a necessary evil or have a useful role to play in the growth of Indian nationalism is yet not finally decided. While the inevitability of regionalism, as a consequence of mass politicisation, and its utility as a means for gratification of a powerful felt urge of the people, are also being appreciated; the debate on the subject is still premised on nation versus region dichotomy.

The liberal plea for more concessions to regional sentiment and the nationalist plea to keep them within limits so as not to threaten national interest also imply recognition of this dichotomy. Both reduce the entire problem to finding out the right mix or balance of the two sentiments.

The reality is not so simplistic. The two sentiments are not entirely exclusive. And each must explain and justify its role in terms of categories other than each other also.

All manifestations of regionalism are not always healthy. But are all manifesta-

tions of nationalism always healthy? Moreover, should national interest be the sole measure of its health? Should interests of the people of the region be no less a valid criterion? While regional chauvinism would be seen to be invariably harmful for the enlightened interest of the region itself, even a healthy form of regionalism would often remain inadequate to satisfy the entire multiplicity of human urges in a modern society. Its proper dose and form need not be exclusively determined by a distant national interest but also by the people of the region whose needs and aspirations have regional as well as national dimensions.

In many cases, regional and national sentiments, far from being exclusive, reinforce and complement each other. As both are essentially based on territorial loyalty, their basic motivations are not dissimilar but are often the product of the same process of self-awareness of the people.

#### INTEGRATING ROLE OF REGIONALISM

Sometimes growth of regionalism positively promotes national integration. It was regionalisation of Kashmiri Muslims that made them aware of the threats to their regional culture from the theocratic monolithic state of Pakistan and motivated them to seek security in a federal Indian framework.

Regional consciousness has in many parts of the country acted as an emotional bridge between the individuals and the nation. The ability of states like Tamil Nadu to assert their distinct entity as a separate linguistic state and in using political power through a regional party sublimated once powerful separatist sentiments into affinity with Indian nationalism which acquired added emotional content for the people of the region.

Regional identities have also proved to be the most potent force in integrating religious and caste communities. West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kashmir which are supposed to be the most intensely conscious of their regional identities are also the outstanding examples of communal harmony.

Regional symbols, regional culture, regional history, regional heroes, regional saints and regional poets are often commonly respected by members of all communities. At the national level common sources of unity and inspiration are far rarer and far less tangible. Even secular regional heroes like Shivaji and Maharana Pratap become symbols of Hindu chauvinism at the national level. Internally integrated secular regional identities could thus provide firmer basis for the edifice of nationalism.

The most effective way of meeting the



threat of separatism and communalism in Punjab and of promoting national integration would, for instance, be to add a dose of regionalism to its body politic which leads its two major communities to rediscover a sense of pride in their common culture and to evolve a common regional political forum. For a secularised Punjab alone can really be an emotionally integrated part of the nation.

Region is the only sub-national identity recognised by the constitution of India for sharing of political power. But India is also a federation of religious communities and other identities which have no territorial base. It is thus the additional task of the regional identities to integrate, channelise and articulate non-territorial identities and thus contribute to the cause of national integration. National level is obviously too remote and far less qualified for this task.

Non-regional conflicts are in general a greater cause of tension than regional conflicts for two reasons. Firstly, the points of conflict of the latter are fewer mostly on or outside the borders of the regions while the first type of conflict might extend to villages and mohallas. Secondly, constitutional outlets are available for regional conflicts while communal and caste conflicts have often to be settled in the streets. Inter-regional or centre-region disputes have never created a serious explosion whereas communal clashes often explode into catastrophes.

For the same reason, while regional dissent can serve as a bulwark against monolithic and authoritarian trends, communal polarisation, for the lack of constitutional outlets, might merely start a vicious circle of fanaticism.

Last, though not the least, regional identities are the most indispensable means for unfolding the creative genius of the people and literary and cultural enrichment of the country. The liberating and integrating role of regional identities has perhaps not been adequately appreciated. Similarly in discussing its limitations, the interests of the people of the region concerned are often overlooked.

When does regionalism become excessive? Just as freedom of a person ends where it threatens the freedom of others, similarly an obvious limit on the rights of a region is that it should not hurt the interests of other regions. While nationalism might be something more than the sum total of regions, how could national interest be conceived as antithetical to the collective interest of all regions?

#### SUB-REGIONAL IDENTITIES

The importance attached to nation-region controversy has obscured an equally

important problem of region versus sub-regions. Most of the states which seek more autonomy from the centre do not extend the same treatment to the regions within.

While regions in some states are entitled to statehood under any rational criteria, some sort of regional autonomy would be necessary in other states. The reversal of the Telugu Desam wave in Telangana, for instance, underlines the importance of aspirations of regions within a state. Recognition and respect of regional identities within each state would not only be a valid extension of the logic of regionalism (if region is treated synonymous with the state) but would also be a reasonable check on its excesses.

In the entire debate over decentralisation in India, the vital tier of region within a state—i.e., between district and the state—is conspicuously missing. The Indian constitution, in fact, does not provide for the concept of regional autonomy. Yet this is what Jammu and Ladakh, in J and K-state, Vidarbha in western Maharashtra and Marathwada in Maharashtra and Saurashtra, Kutch and the rest of the state in Gujarat, Darjeeling in West Bengal, Cachar in Assam, Uttarakhand in UP, Jharkhand in Bihar and, in fact, one region or the other in every state is crying for.

Unless power within each state is equitably shared, any enlargement of the power of the states might merely increase their coercive power over the regions and minorities within them. And to take the idea of devolution of power to the grassroots, it must be linked with the three-tier institutions of democratic decentralisation. Their rights, functions and elections should not be left to the arbitrary whims of the state governments but must be enshrined in the constitution.

Thus checks from below are as important to prevent aberrations and excesses of regionalism as from above. States or regions, however, are not only divided by sub-regions and territorial identities but also by religious, caste, class, professional and ideological affiliations which cut across regions. The role of regional identities depends on which of these groups dominate them.

If non-applicability of certain central financial laws to Sikkim, and hence its autonomy, had resulted in profits of a couple of hundred crores of rupees to some Indian companies within a few months which they shared with a handful of influential Sikkimese citizens, why should a common man be enthusiastic about this autonomy? Similarly if in Kashmir Article 370 of the constitution

stands in the way of workers getting a minimum bonus to which their counterparts in the rest of the country are statutorily entitled, emotional support for the Article among the workers of the state would be weakend. And as long as the fundamental rights of the constitution and jurisdiction of the union institutions like the Supreme Court, the Election Commission, the Auditor General and the UPSC did not extend to the state, its people were far less free than elsewhere in India. Thus under certain conditions and beyond a limit, the autonomy of a state can come into conflict with the interest of the working class and the freedom of the people and hence become a means of exploitation.

The question of quantum of autonomy is, therefore, not to be exclusively settled in terms of respective rights and responsibilities of the states and the centre but also by the manner in which power is shared and used within the states. The manner of using power is connected with such questions as how much freedom dissenters get, which class of people is politically and economically dominant, what is the relative emphasis on inter-sectoral allocations on production and distribution and, in short, which ideological direction the state opts for.

In a democracy, ideological options remain open. In other words, political parties have freedom to compete for power and implement their respective ideologies. As ideologies are no respecters of geographical boundaries, they also check exclusiveness of regional identities. In fact, it was the decline of the party system in recent years that inflated the role of regionalism in the country.

In no case can a regional identity exhaust the wide diversity of urges of people today except by distorting or emasculating their personalities and raising their emotions to a fanatic pitch. Limits to this role are set by the needs and aspirations of the people of the region, including their need and aspirations as Indian citizens.

National interest must certainly be paramount. But a concept of nationalism as a remote mythical entity entrusted with the job of curbing and disciplining the sub-national urges would invariably lead to tensions. On the other hand, a symbiotic, and not dichotomous, relation between national and sub-national identities is closer to reality and a surer basis for a harmonious growth of nationalism and its constituent parts. And both levels of identities would always need values and a sense of direction, i.e., some sort of ideological groundings.



current preoccupation with the surging tide of communalism, discussion has inevitably veered round to defining the term 'communalism' and what is usually perceived to be its opposite, secularism. It has been repeatedly emphasised by social scientists as well as politicians that while in Europe secularism has come to signify the State's indifference to all matters religious, in India its meaning is the very opposite, in that the State here is expected to treat all religions with equal respect. At the social level the sentiment of 'Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai*' is perceived as the negation of communalism.

The 'Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai*' sentiment has a history of at least five centuries behind it; some of the greatest of India's saint-poets, commanding impressive mass followings, had propagated and advanced this notion during the medieval centuries. At a time when conflicts within the various components of the ruling class could often take on communal colouring, 'Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai*' could preserve peace at the social level. This, partly because political processes in medieval centuries, unlike today, were to a far lesser extent based on mass

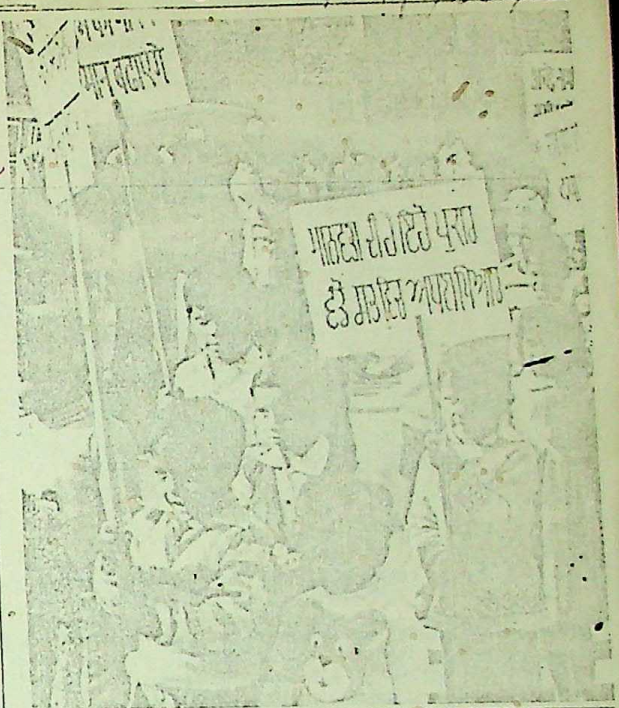
creative categories in an entirely changed context of the twentieth century, when a much wider choice is possible. It is thus that in any situation of an upsurge of communalism all we do is to sermonise on the need to preserve communal harmony. Communalism and secularism are perceived in a dichotomous relationship, one as the opposite of the other.

Within the parameters of this dichotomy, communalism supposedly represents the aspirations of any one religious community, especially in the arena of politics, and secularism is in turn seen as seeking to represent the aspirations of all communities, without bias towards any. Secularism is thus seen as smoothening the ridges of tension between communities and projecting for all of them a mutually harmonious struggle against a third enemy — imperialism before Independence and the threat to nation's unity afterwards.

Yet, evidently this medieval vision of 'secularism' has proved rather an ineffective weapon in the struggle against communalism during the twentieth century, both before and after independence. The communal demand for the partition of India did after all win the day and the rising curve of communal tension with every passing decade since Independence can hardly give comfort to those committed to the promotion of communal harmony.

In the communalism/secularism dichotomy, communalism is commonly identified at a point of tension, at a point where there is overt or veiled discrimination in favour of, or against, a person or a group for reasons of religious affinity; in an extreme case, therefore more obvious case, manifestation of communalism occurs in the form of communal rioting. The absence of such tension is then understood as secularism. However, the problem with this vision is that it identifies communalism at one single locus, whereas in reality communalism comprises a range of positions; while in this vision cognisance of communalism is taken at a point of tension, its silent manifestation goes unnoticed.

The silent manifestation of communalism inheres in the very use of community as the category of social analysis and political operation. The use of this category — the treatment of Hindus as Hindus and Muslims as Muslims and so forth — allows of the following two strategies of political operation: a political party could either seek to consolidate support for itself among all communities by projecting the 'Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai*' sentiment. This would imply an appeal to the minorities that the religious



Marching for communal harmony: an act of faith

and cultural identity, apart from their economic interests, would be secure under the benign outlook of that party. This is the strategy that the Congress has always excelled in practising. Or else, a party could seek the support of a single community; in which case it would be natural to overstate the assumed hostility of other community or communities to one's own. This strategy is adopted by the Rashtriya Swyamsewa Sangh (RSS), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Muslim League, the Akali Dal etc.

Although these two strategies are presented to us as alternatives, they share with each other the basic unit of operation, namely the community, which remains the unit of political mobilisation in either case. Hence, far from being one or the other alternative, the two strategies together constitute a continuum, comprising the whole range of communal positions in all their manifestations.

However, an interchange of positions is possible. Recently there have been two excellent demonstrations of such interchange of positions and subsequent return to the original strategies. The Congress practically wiped out the BJP from the electoral scene first from Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in 1983, and soon after from Parliament, by adopting the latter strategy; and having won the electoral bat-

tle on the BJP platform, it has resiled to the 'secular', 'Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai*' approach. The BJP on its part, following its electoral debacle, made a brief experiment with the *bhai-bhai* strategy, but has recently thought it fit to reassert its earlier identity.

To a large extent this highly questionable communalism/secularism dichotomy is a legacy of the national movement when the two strategies represented by the Muslim League and the Congress respectively, occupied the centre of the stage. Historically, the two organisations stood as one-another's alternatives; yet conceptually, operating with the same analytical category, they shared much with each other.

It was this large common ground that facilitated a smooth shift by individuals from one organisation to the other, then as now; some of the illustrious leaders of the Congress were simultaneously members of various professedly communal organisations. But, individuals apart, the organisations themselves often found common platforms for launching various agitations. And if the Muslim League's claim to being the exclusive representative of Muslim interests became too loud, all the Congress could think of was to launch the Muslim Mass Contact Programme, in which the Muslims were to be assured of the protection of their Muslim identity but

## by Harbans Mukhia

mobilisation; hence the disjuncture between 'communal' conflict at the political level and communal peace at the social level remained by and large viable.

Thus even in the midst of massive conflicts between the medieval 'Muslim' state and leaders of several other religious groups such as the Marathas and Jat Hindus, Sikhs and of course the minority Shia groups in Goleonda and Bijapur, and in spite of the occasional vigorous spurt of religious orthodoxy in state policy, instances of communal rioting, involving common people of different communities, remained extremely rare during the five-and-a-half centuries of 'Muslim' rule. Perhaps the first 'genuine' riot of this nature occurred towards the close of this period, in 1693 in Ahmedabad.

Partly also, owing to the absence of any conscious conceptual alternative to the operative category of community in medieval times, the political and social choice remained confined to either promoting communal conflict or communal harmony. The former was achieved by overstating the differences and points of tension between communities; the latter by highlighting their common features.

The problem today, however, arises from utilising the same op-



Communalism all we do is to sermonise on the need to preserve communal harmony. Communalism and secularism are perceived as a dichotomous relationship, one as the opposite of the other. Within the parameters of this dichotomy, communalism supposedly represents the aspirations of any one religious community, especially in the arena of politics, and secularism is in turn seen as seeking to represent the aspirations of all communities, without bias towards any. Secularism is thus seen as smoothening the ridges of tension between communities and projecting for all of them a mutually harmonious struggle against a third enemy — imperialism before Independence and the threat to nation's unity afterwards.

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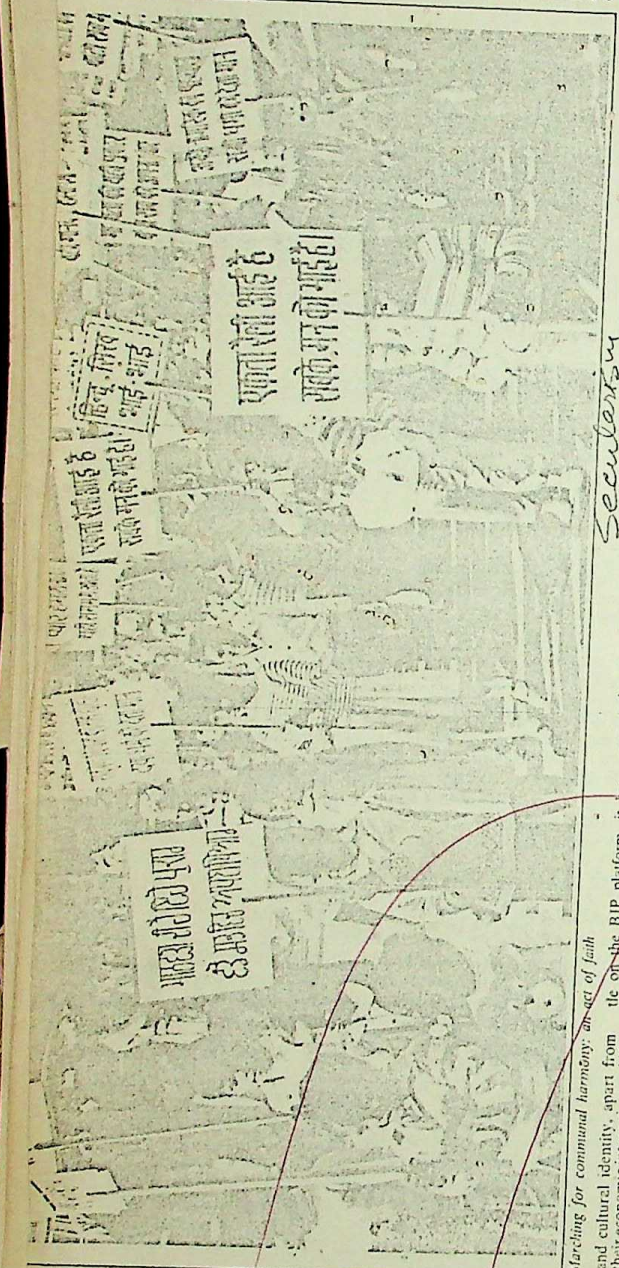
# Ly Karbans Mukhia

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## Secularism

were to be persuaded to come to the Congress fold instead of going to the League. This was an attempt to blend the nationalist sentiment of the Muslims with their communal identity. Clearly then since the call of the Congress to the Muslims was only partially different from that of the League in that it with appealed to their Muslim identity, though in different measures, the Congress appeal could only be weakly persuasive and short-lived. The appearance of the slightest communal tension, engineered by either side, would send the Muslims reeling back to the League banner. If then the Congress and the League (or 'nationalism' and 'communalism') stood conceptually their negation in real life, each other's negation in real life, sidestep with each other.

Conceptually it is the analysis of society in terms of class that stands as a real alternative to communalism and similar other phenomena like casteism, regionalism etc. for the class identity transcends and stands in opposition to the communal or caste or regional identities. It was this alternative that was unavailable to India's medieval centuries. It needs to be emphasised here that the concept of class is inclusive of, but not coextensive with, modern operative units. Communal economic analysis, as is much concerned with the consciousness

On one hand, such mobilisation has helped a very large mass of people to participate in this modern political process; on the other the very success of such participation has tended to reinforce, rather than erode, their communalisation of votes, with the attendant list of demands on behalf of the mobilised community or caste.

For reasons of history our polity is today overwhelmingly dominated by parties which operate with community as their central analytical category, though following different strategies. The parties operating largely with the alternative conceptual category of class, though exercising considerable influence, do not appear to be in a position in the near future, to counterbalance the overwhelming presence of communalism in all its prange of manifestations. It is thus that the true conceptual alternative to communalism is far from becoming the real life alternative. So long then as we work this polity, there appears hardly an escape from communalisation. The already open much easier to treat the violent manifestation of communalism as a law-and-order problem, even as at the sub-continental level, we operate through its silent manifestation for mobilising votes and support. At times the heavy hand of the law and order machinery might control the violent eruption effectively; at others it might fail to do so."

with a burgeoning economy, al or caste identity. It created in Ahmedabad, Baroda, Hyderabad, Mumbai and of course Punjab further strengthening their communal leadership of these groups to order eruption effectively; at others it might fail to do so. But the subterranean silent tensions created by the routine operations of political parties, in government, outside, will always keep accumulating the dry powder, ready for the next violent explosion.

However, the record of these parties is rather a mixed bag. Nor infrequently they have eagerly entered into alliances with patently communal parties for the sake of winning elections and forming governments, parties such as the Muslim League in Kerala and Akali Dal in Punjab, even the Jan Sangh (briefly in 1967). Nor could the left parties always claim that the communal or caste identity of a person had never weighed with them in choosing their candidates.

One could, of course, argue that the existence of communities is after all a fact of life and any analysis of society which ignores this fact can hardly approximate to the realities of life. But then it is equally true that our society comprises so many different identities: it consists of peasants and landlords, artisans and traders, workers and capitalists as much as of Hindus and Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, Brahmins and lower castes, Bengalis and Telugus etc. Therefore the analysis of Indian society in terms of one category has no more privileged a claim to real life approximation than another. The choice of analytical categories by political parties is as much as by social scientists is after all a subjective choice. However, everyone must reckon with the social consequences of one's choice.

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# THE LAST DAYS WITH GANDHI

MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE

Photography demands a high degree of participation, but never have I participated to such an extent as I did when photographing various episodes in the life of Gandhi.

I shall always remember the day we met. I went to see him at his camp, or *ashram*, in Poona where he was living in the midst of a colony of untouchables. Having thought of Mahatma Gandhi as a symbol of simplicity, I was a bit surprised to find that I had to go through several secretaries to get permission to photograph him. When I reached the last and chief secretary, an earnest man in hornrimmed spectacles, and dressed entirely in snow-white homespun, I explained my mission. I had come to take photographs of the Mahatma spinning.

"Do you know how to spin?" asked Gandhi's secretary.

"Oh, I didn't come to spin with the Mahatma. I came to photograph the Mahatma spinning."

"How can you possibly understand the symbolism of Gandhi at his spinning wheel? How can you comprehend the inner meaning of the wheel, the *charkha*, unless you first master the principles of spinning?" He inquired sharply. "Then you are not at all familiar with the workings of the spinning wheel?"

"No. Only with the workings of a camera."

The secretary fell into rhapsody. "The spinning wheel is a marvel of human ingenuity. The *charkha* is machinery reduced to the level of the toiling masses. Consider the great machines of the factories, with all their complex mechanisms, and consider the *charkha*. There are no ball bearings; there is not even a nail. The spinning wheel symbolizes what Gandhi calls 'the proletarianism of science'."

It was useless for me to protest that I had a deadline to meet, that this very evening a package of film must be at the airport to be placed on a certain transoceanic plane that would be met at the airfield in New York, rushed to the *Life* photo lab, processed through the night, and in the morning, a scant forty-eight hours after the taking of the photograph, finished prints of the Mahatma at his spinning wheel would be lying on the *Life* editor's desk.

As the secretary became more involved in his oratory, I grew desperate. "The *charkha* illustrates a major tenet of Gandhi's. When individually considered, man is insignificant, even like a drop of water; but in the mass, he becomes mighty and powerful like the ocean."

"You will make me drop photography and take up spinning." I said politely, wondering when we could get back to the appointment.

"That is just what I wish to do," said Gandhi's secretary....

"How long does it take to learn to spin?" I asked wearily.

"Ah," said the secretary, "that depends upon one's quotient of intelligence."

I found myself begging for a spinning lesson.

"I must compose editorials for Gandhi's weekly magazine *Harijan*," said the secretary. "I have a deadline to meet. Come back again next Tuesday."

Somehow I persuaded Gandhi's secretary that my spinning lesson must start this very afternoon. It embarrassed me to see how clumsy I was at the spinning wheel, constantly entangling myself. It did not help my opinion of my own i.Q. to see how often and how awkwardly I broke the thread. I began to appreciate as never



before the machine age, with its ball bearings and steel parts, and maybe an occasional nail.

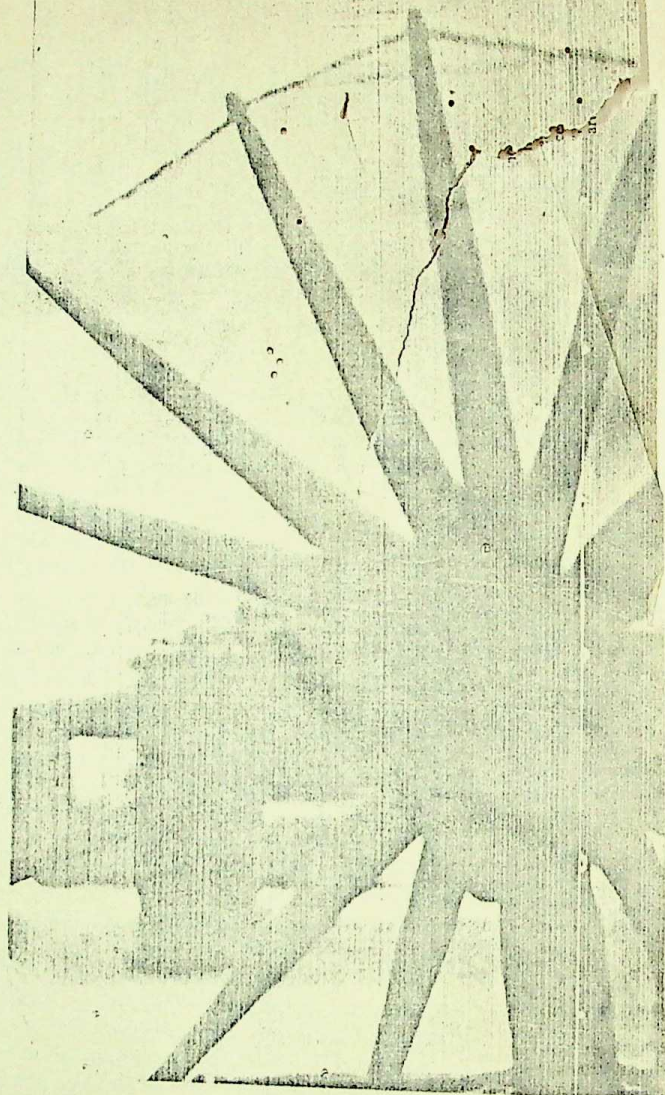
Finally, my instructor decided I could spin well enough to be brought into the presence of the Mahatma. There were two injunctions I must faithfully follow. I must not speak to the Mahatma, as this was Monday, his day of silence. And I must not use any form of artificial light, as Gandhi disliked it. I could see from the outside that Gandhi's hut was going to be very dark indeed (a perfect job for Tri-X and souped-up developers, which then we did not have.) I pleaded with Gandhi's secretary to allow me some lighting equipment, and finally he allotted me three peanut flashbulbs.

I found the inside of the hut even darker than I had anticipated. A single beam of daylight shone from a little high window directly into my lens and into my eyes as well. I could scarcely see to compose the picture, but when my eyes became accustomed to the murky shadows, there sat the Mahatma, crosslegged, a spidery figure with long, wiry legs, a bald head and spectacles. Could this be the man who was leading his people to freedom—the little old man in a loin cloth who had kindled the imagination of the world? I was filled with an emotion as close to awe as a photographer can come.

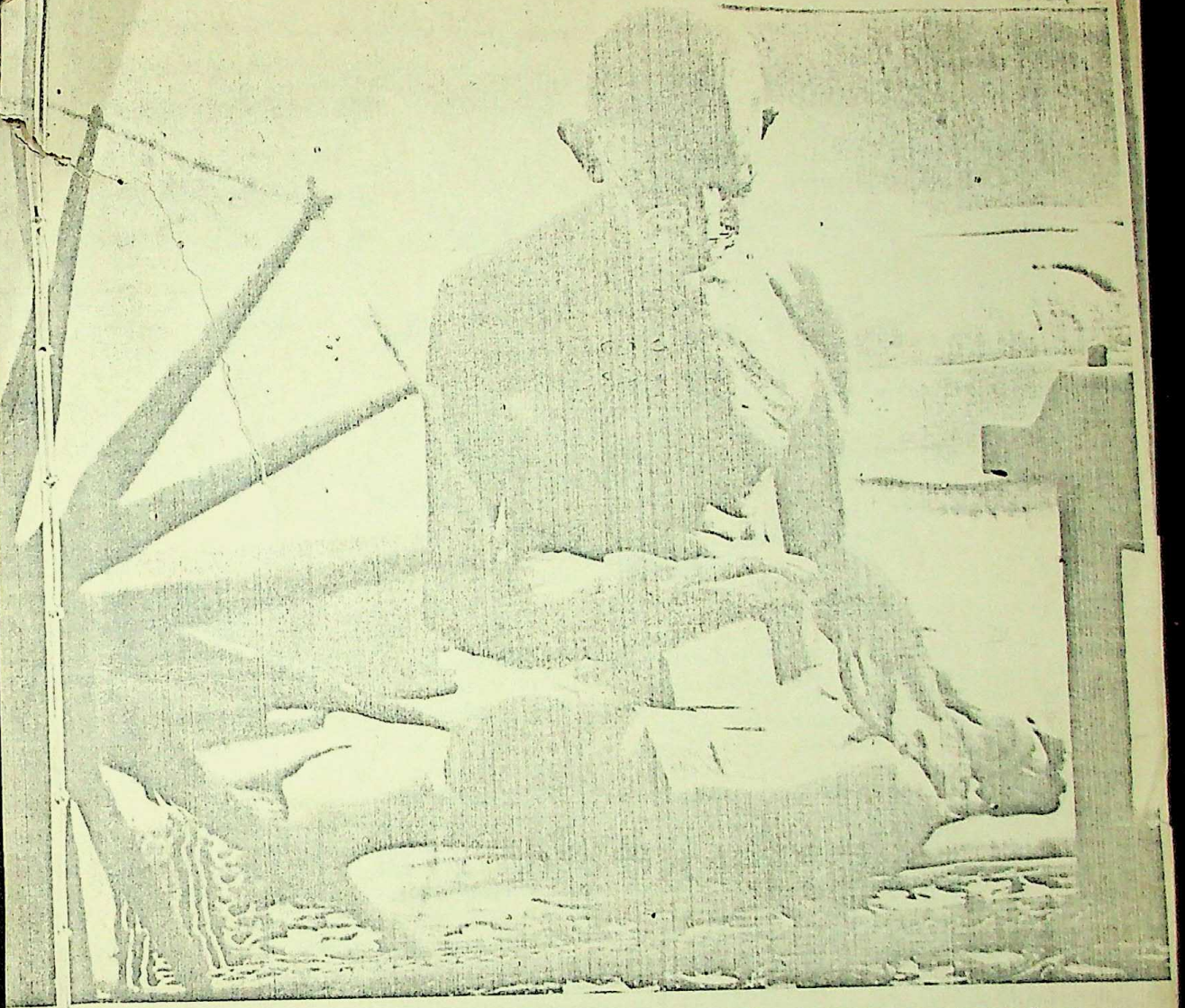
He sat in complete silence on the floor; the only sound was a little rustling from the pile of newspaper clippings he was reading. And beside him was that spinning wheel I had heard so much about. I was grateful that he would not speak to me, for I could see it would take all the attention I had to overcome the halation from that wretched window just over his head.

Gandhi pushed his clippings aside, and pulled his spinning wheel closer. He started to spin, beautifully, rhythmically and with a fine nimble hand. I set off the first of the three flashbulbs. It was quite plain from the span of time from the click of the shutter to the flash of the bulb that my equipment was not synchronizing properly. The heat and moisture of India had affected all my equipment; nothing seemed to work. I decided to hoard my two remaining flashbulbs, and take a few time exposures. But this I had to abandon when my tripod "froze" with one leg at its minimum and two at their maximum length.

Before risking the second flashbulb, I checked the apparatus with the utmost care. When Gandhi made a most beautiful movement as he drew the thread, I pushed the trigger and was reassured by the sound that everything had worked properly. Then I noticed that I had forgotten to pull the slide.







*Gandhi with charkha at an ashram in Poona.*

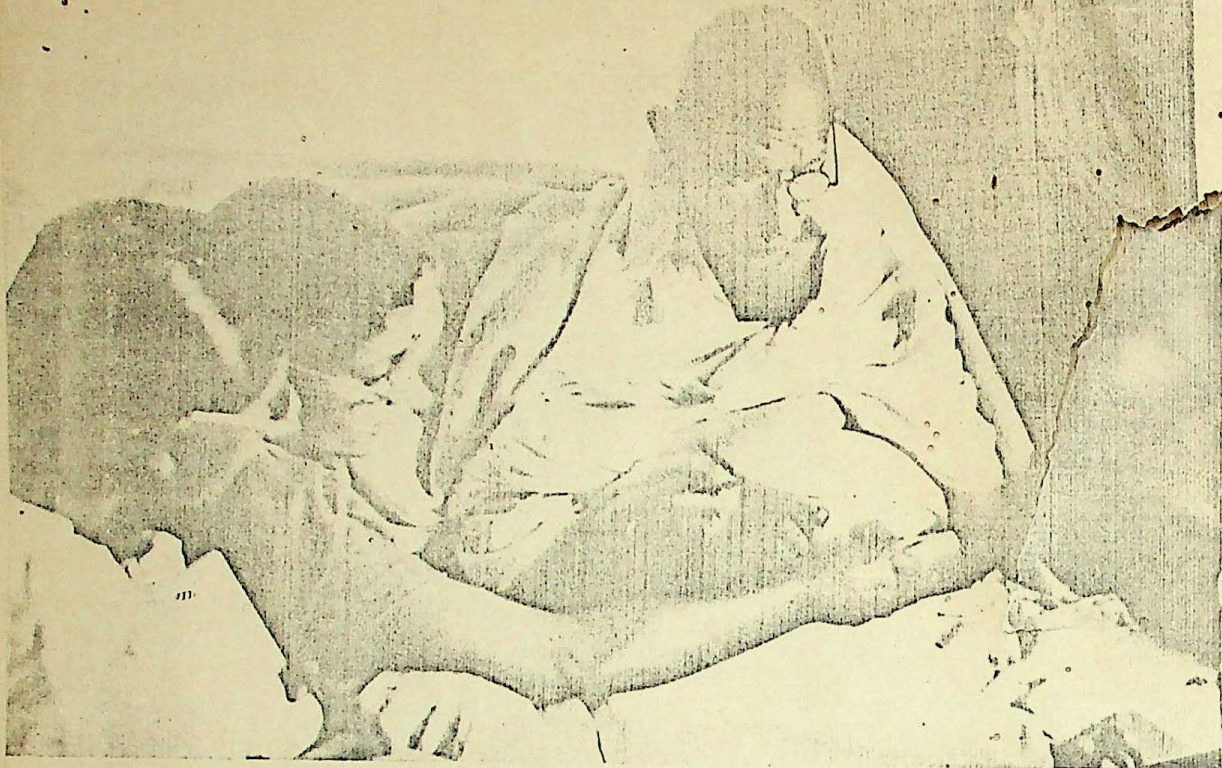
I hazarded the third peanut, and it worked. I threw my arms around the rebellious equipment and stumbled out into the daylight quite unsold on the machine age. Spinning wheels could take priority over cameras any time.

The secretary was waiting outside, all smiles. I had been in the "presence!" I belonged. He

asked graciously if I would like to see a demonstration of spinning on Gandhi's own personal spinning wheel—the portable one he carried when he traveled.

"I would enjoy that very much," I replied. I enjoyed it even more than I had anticipated, for, in the middle of the secretary's demonstra-





*Immediately after having broken his five-day-long fast (121 hours and 30 minutes), Gandhi edits his first message. As Dr. E. Stanley Jones wrote on this occasion, "A passage was read from the Gita and the Koran; the hymn "When I survey the Wondrous Cross" was sung, and a glass of orange juice was handed him."*

tion, the spinning wheel fell to pieces. That made me feel better about the machine age.

This was the first of many occasions on which I photographed the Mahatma. Gandhi, who loved a little joke, had his own nickname for me. Whenever I appeared on the scene with camera and flashbulbs, he would say, "There's the Torturer again." But it was said with affection.

As time went on, I saw this incident of the spinning wheel in a different light. Translated into the many situations a photographer must meet, the rule set up by Gandhi's secretary was a good one: if you want to photograph a man spinning, give some thought to why he spins. Understanding, for a photographer, is as important as the equipment he uses. I have always believed what goes on, unseen, in back of the lens is just as important as what goes on in front of it. In the case of Gandhi, the spinning wheel was laden with meaning.

I went back home with my pictures and my impressions, and as usual after one of these big trips, I started writing a book. The work in India had been a most stimulating part of my life. It was an inspiration to have such a vast subject spread on an enormous canvas and peopled with such extraordinary personalities. Trying to understand this complex country so I could make it clear to others called out everything I had to give.

This book had not followed the course of my other books, where things usually got somewhat easier as I went along. I wrote half a book. Then, all at once, I saw what the trouble was. I just did not know enough to write a book about India, and I arranged to send myself back.

Just before my departure, religious violence in India and Pakistan again broke into the news. Independence, apparently, wasn't going too smoothly. *Life* commissioned me to do a



story on the great exchange of populations and the new nation of Pakistan. And, at the last moment, CBS engaged me to do some live broadcasts, all this fitted in perfectly with my plans. And back I went....

The terrible chain of events stirred Gandhi, in Delhi, to action of his own nonviolent kind. He chose a weapon which was peculiarly Asian, and had brought him spectacular successes in the past. He announced at the prayer meeting that he would undertake a fast directed against the savageries of religious warfare.

This would be the sixteenth fast of Gandhi's life. He was now seventy-eight. This fast could be his last. The previous fifteen had been directed against the British Government, but this fast was against the inadequacies of the new all-Indian government, which he had done so much to create. Being a Hindu himself, Gandhi found it intolerable that other Hindus should be massacring the Moslem minority. When Hindu refugees began storming Moslem mosques in Delhi, throwing out Moslem worshippers and moving their own families into these holy places, Gandhi felt the moment for action had come.

With this sixteenth fast, Gandhi was launching the hardest battle of his life—the battle to conquer inner hatreds. His method of nonviolence had led his people to independence. Now he was faced with the more difficult task of winning tolerance and unity.

It is difficult for a Westerner to understand the significance of a fast. I called on Pandit Nehru, who I was sure could help me understand. "Voluntary suffering," said Nehru, "has great effect on the Indian mind. Gandhi is a kind of sentinel who stands apart. The fast does two things: it introduces a sense of urgency to the problem, and forces people to think out of the rut—to think afresh."

Next morning, there was a little ceremony for which Gandhi's closest followers gathered. I was within arm's length of the Mahatma while he took his last mouthful of boiled beans, his last sip of goat's milk, and placed on the cot in front of him his famous dollar watch. The hands pointed to 11. The fast had formally begun. Some of his women followers began to cry.

Many people came to prayers that night in

the garden, and waited in uneasy silence for Gandhi to speak. He began talking very simply about the reasons for the fast—how all people deserved equal protection and equal freedom of religious worship, and emphasized that there must be no retaliation against acts of violence. "How long will you fast?" asked Gandhi. "Until I am satisfied that people of all religions in India mix like brothers and move without fear; otherwise, my fast can never end."

As he talked, I thought, it is really himself he has on trial. He has a religious position of his own to defend—his belief in the brotherhood of man, which is just as essential to Hinduism as it is to Christianity. His whole philosophy of nonviolence is at stake. He is pitting all the strength left in his thin, wiry body against the spirit of hate consuming his country. One could sense his power to call on the people's inner strengths, for he was closer to the soul of India than any other man. I believe that everyone who went to prayers that night had a feeling that greatness hovered over the frail little figure talking so earnestly in the deepening twilight. "I am not alone," were his closing words. "Because although there is darkness on the way, God is with me."

During the tense days that followed, the Mahatma became too weak to go to prayers in the garden. The people were clamoring for a sight of Gandhiji, and one day they were allowed to line up by twos and file through the garden at the back of Birla House, where Gandhi was staying. The doors of the porch were open. Gandhi's cot had been set between them, and on it lay the little old man, asleep.

I find it hard to describe my feelings at seeing this frail little figure lying there, with the silent, reverent people filing by. It would be impossible to imagine such a thing in America—a prominent person asleep and yet on exhibition to his public. There is an extraordinary amount of personal intimacy in the attitude of Indians towards their leaders. I have never seen it in any other country....

On the sixth day of the fast, early in the morning, I went to Birla House and learned from Gandhi's happy followers that the Mahatma had received what they called a "spate" of telegrams. At exactly eleven o'clock Gandhi broke his fast. It was a moving experience to be there and see the people laughing and crying for joy.



Gandhi lay smiling on his mattress on the floor, clutching some peace telegrams in his long, bony hands. I jumped up to a high desk and got my camera into action. Gandhi's daughter-in-law rushed in with a tall glass of fruit juice, and he kissed her. Then Pandit Nehru, who was sitting by his side, made a little ceremony of holding Gandhi's glass of orange juice for him.

Then the women followers flocked in carrying trays of orange slices, which Gandhi blessed. This was *prasad*, food offered to God. The women passed the fruit platters to the crowd even handing up bits of orange to me, where I stood taking pictures, so that the foreigner, too, could share in the gift offered to God.

On January 29, I had reached my last day in India, and on this final day I had arranged a special treat for myself—an interview with Gandhi—because although I had photographed him many times, and we had exchanged scraps of conversation with one another, I had never had a chance to sit down and talk with him quietly.

I found Gandhi seated on a cot in the garden, with his spinning wheel in front of him. He put on a big straw hat when I arrived, to keep the sun out of his eyes. It was a hat someone had brought him from Korea, and he tied it at a gay angle under his chin. I told Gandhi that this was my last day, and explained that I was writing a book on India, and wanted to have a talk with him before I went home.

"How long have you been working on this book?"

"It's almost two years now."

"Two years is too long for an American to work on a book," said Gandhiji, laughing. He began to spin, as he always did during interviews.

My first question seemed a rather silly one at the time; later, it seemed almost prophetic. "Gandhiji," I said, "you have always stated that you would live to be a hundred and twenty-five years old. What gives you that hope?"

His answer was startling. "I have lost the hope."

I asked him why. "Because of the terrible happenings in the world. I can no longer live in darkness and madness. I cannot continue..." He paused, and I waited. Thoughtfully, he picked up a strand of cotton, gave it a twist and ran it into the spinning wheel. "But if I am

needed," he went on in his careful English, "rather, I should say, if I am commanded, then I shall live to be a hundred and twenty-five years old." . . .

I turned to the topic which I had most wanted to discuss with Gandhiji. I began speaking of the weight with which our new and terrible nuclear knowledge hangs over us, and of our increasing fear of a war which would destroy the world. Holding in our hands the key to the ultimate in violence, we might draw some guidance, I hoped, from the apostle of non-violence.

As we began to speak of these things, I became aware of a change in my attitude toward Gandhi. No longer was this merely an odd little man in a loin cloth, with his quaint ideas about bullock-cart culture and his vague social palliatives—certain of which I rejected. I felt in the presence of a new and greater Gandhi. My deepening appreciation of Gandhi began when I saw the power and courage with which he led the way in the midst of chaos.

I asked Gandhi whether he believed America should stop manufacturing the atom bomb. Unhesitatingly, he replied, "Certainly America should stop." Of course, when I had this talk with Gandhi, the atom bomb was not yet obsolete, nor had the hysteria of nuclear testing swept around the world. Gandhi went on to stress the importance of choosing righteous paths, whether for a nation or for a single man; for bad means could never bring about good ends. He spoke thoughtfully, haltingly, always with the most profound sincerity. As we sat there in the thin winter sunlight, he spinning, and I jotting down his words, neither of us could know that this was to be one of the last—perhaps his very last—messages to the world.

Since that momentous day, many people have asked me whether one knew when in Gandhi's presence that this was an extraordinary man. The answer is yes. One knew. And never had I felt it more strongly than on this day, when the inconsistencies that had troubled me dropped away, and Gandhi began to probe at that dreadful problem which had overwhelmed us all.

I asked Gandhiji how he would meet the atom bomb. Would he meet it with non-violence? "Ah," he said, "How shall I answer that? I would meet it by prayerful action."



I asked what form that action would take.

"I will not go underground. I will not go into shelters. I will go out and face the pilot so he will see I have not the face of evil against him."

He turned back to his spinning, and I was tempted to ask, "The pilot would see all that at his altitude?" But Gandhi sensed my silent question.

"I know the pilot will not see our faces from his great height, but that longing in our hearts that he should not come to harm would reach up to him, and his eyes would be opened. Of those thousands who were done to death in Hiroshima, if they had died with that prayerful action—died openly with that prayer in their hearts—then the war would not have ended as disgracefully as it has. It is a question now whether the victors are really victors or victims ... of our own lust ... and omission." He was speaking very slowly, and his words had become toneless and low. "The world is not at peace." His voice had sunk almost to a whisper. "It is still more dreadful than before."

I rose to leave, and folded my hands together in the gesture of farewell which Hindus use. But Gandhiji held out his hand to me and shook hands cordially in Western fashion. We said good-bye, and I started off. Then something made me turn back. His manner had been so friendly. I stopped and looked over my shoulder, and said, "Goodbye, and good luck." Only a few hours later, on his way to evening prayers, this man who believed that even the atom bomb should be met with nonviolence was struck down by revolver bullets.

I was only a few blocks away when the assassin's bullet was fired. News travels with lightning swiftness in India, and in a few minutes, I was back at Birla House. Thousands of people were already pressing toward the scene of the tragedy. The rush was so great, I could hardly reach the door, but the guards recognized me and helped me through. In the next moment, I was in the room where Gandhi, dead less than an hour, lay on a mattress in a corner on the floor. His head was cradled lovingly in the lap of his secretary; the devoted little grandnieces and daughters-in-law who had always surrounded him in life clustered around him now as he lay in his last sleep.

I remembered the joyful moment when he

had broken his fast only ten days earlier in this very room. I had stood in this very spot and watched him smile up from this same mattress. Then everyone had been laughing for joy. Now they were silent and stunned. Few people even wept. The only sound was the endless chanting of the *Gita* by the women followers who sat along the edge of the mattress and swayed to the rhythmic recitations of the "Song of God," always sung at the death of a Hindu. The women kneeling along the mattress were beating their hands softly to the rhythm of the prayer.

Suddenly into the numbness of that grief-filled room came the incongruous tinkle of broken glass. The glass doors and windows were giving way from the pressure of the crowds outside, straining wildly for one last look at their Mahatma, even in death. No one expected Mahatmaji would die, even during the fast and when the homemade bomb was exploded during prayers. And now that death had come, the sense of personal loss was almost beyond endurance.

I pressed my way through the grief-stricken crowd to the garden path where Gandhiji had met his end. The place was marked off with a humble little line of sticks, and a large and very ordinary tin can about the size of a large jam tin had been put down to indicate the exact spot where he fell. Already a radiance hung over the spot. Someone had marked the place with a candle. And kneeling around it were men and women of all religions, just as Gandhiji would have had it. United in deepest sorrow, they were reverently scooping up into their handkerchiefs small handfuls of the blood-stained earth to carry away and preserve.

I was swept by the crowd back to the gates, and there I found Nehru speaking. Once more, he had climbed up on the gatepost of Birla House to address the people. "The great light is extinguished," he said. "Mahatmaji is gone, and darkness surrounds us all. I have no doubt he will continue to guide us from the borders of the Great Beyond, but we shall never be able to get that solace which we got by running to him for advice on every difficulty."

At this point, Nehru broke down and wept openly on his gatepost, and the crowd wept with him. Then he made a supreme effort to speak a final sentence. "We can best serve the spirit of Gandhiji by dedicating ourselves to the ideals



for which he lived, and the cause for which he died."

All through that terrible night, people gathered in hushed groups in the streets. In the morning, I would have pictures to take, and broadcasts to think of. But this night, I gave myself over to walking the streets, sharing the shock and sorrow of the crowds. Within hours, the police had captured the assassin, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, a fanatical Brahmin, editor of a Hindu Mahasabha weekly in Poona. Later he would be given the death penalty. But to those masses of bereaved people, it was not merely one misguided individual who had murdered their Gandhiji, but an impersonal force that had dealt out death.

In this, they were very right. It was no accident that Gandhi was done away with by a fellow Hindu—one of those who stood for all that was worst and most rabid in the religion, just as Gandhi stood for all that was broadest and best.

By dawn, the lawn and gardens of Birla House and all streets leading into it were flooded with people. By the thousands they swirled through the Birla gates until they crushed in an indivisible mass against the house. And still they came, beating against the walls of the house in surging waves of mourning humanity. I doubt if there has ever been a scene like it. Certainly there has been none in my experience. The house, with its concrete terraces, was like a rocky island, holding its precious burden high above the sea of grief. Laid out on the roof of the terrace was the figure of Gandhi, tranquil and serene.

The morning sunlight lent a special radiance to the coarsely woven homespun which draped his body. He was carried down, placed on a flower-laden bier and covered with the yellow, white and green flag of the new free India. Then, that greatest of all processions began to move toward the sacred burning ground on the bank of the River Jumna. The human stream gathered to itself all the tributaries of the countryside. It grew and grew until it was a mighty river miles long, and a mile wide, draining toward the shore of the sacred river. People covered the entire visible landscape until they reached the sacred banks. I never before had photographed or even imagined such an ocean of human beings.

Somehow I managed to get to the center of the dense, mourning throng, where the funeral pyre of sandalwood logs had been lighted. Occasionally I could catch a glimpse of the three Hindu priests kindling the fire and scattering perfumed chips on the blaze. Then a glimpse of Nehru's haggard face as he stood by the edge of the bier. Twilight was coming. The flames were rising high into the sky. All through the night, the people would watch until the flames burned down to embers.

The curtain was falling on the tragic last act. The drama I had come to India to record had run its course. I had shared some of India's greatest moments. Nothing in all my life has affected me more deeply, and the memory will never leave me. I had seen men die on the battlefield for what they believed in, but I had never seen anything like this: one Christlike man giving his life to bring unity to his people.

*Gandhi's funeral bier. (Jawaharlal Nehru, left, near pillar; Earl Louis Mountbatten, right, back to camera, white hat.)*



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parties to create social chaos, then it must abdicate power. The communists failed to arouse popular unrest on economic issues. Not all the misery and starvation provide powder enough for a social explosion. The communalist parties have a slightly better opportunity for creating unrest. They would not be human and they would not be political if they did not try to use the handle which seems to be at hand. The question is, would they succeed?

It is not an easy question to answer. Demoralisation and disorganisation of the administration are preconditions for the success of the communalist parties but the morale of the administration itself is a function of many factors. Widespread discontent among the populace is bound to affect administrative morale. An unprecedented inflation ravaged Germany in 1924 and swept away the economic substance of the middle-class; it paved the way for the triumph of National Socialism, whose victory was sealed with the outbreak and seemingly endless duration of the great depression which started in 1929.

In India, the food shortage, growing unemployment and spiralling prices which widen the gap between the rich and the poor provide objective conditions for the demoralisation of the administration. But these objective factors would not suffice to bring about the collapse of the secular State and the rise of a theocratic State or a demented regime. Lack of vision about what is to be done on the part of secular-minded political parties and confidence on the part of the anti-secular forces that they know where they are going would suffice to complete the circle of destruction.

Danger of Insanity

A communalist party in power need not be non-secular. If it is imbued with determination to sustain and develop an autonomous political community, it would be compelled to adopt policies similar to those of the present ruling party. I say this not to minimise the danger of communalism nor to condone it, but to emphasize



my point that the political situation in India has its compulsions and that the main equation in India is not that between the secular and the non-secular. It is between self-dependence of a social group on the one side and subservience to a supernatural force or to an ancient but unknown tradition on the other side. The contrast between the Weimar Republic in Germany and the Hitler regime which followed it was not that of secularism and non-secularism or even of democracy against dictatorship but that of sanity versus insanity.

The danger in India is that the secularism of the present political order might be subverted by insanity. Events in France provide a salutary example. The Fourth Republic was secular and tolerant. In this respect, the Fifth Republic under de Gaulle is perhaps no less secular or tolerant in religious matters. In some ways de Gaulle has acted more sanely, especially in bringing the Algerian War to a conclusion. One might well claim that the determination of de Gaulle to make France into a nuclear power is not very sane. Yet it does reveal a determination on his part to prevent France from becoming a political or military dependency of the U.S.A. and Britain. The same reasons seem to motivate Communist China. The motive force of its quarrel with the Soviet Union is its determination to function as a fully autonomous political community, i.e., a sovereign State.

#### Determination and Wisdom

The question for India is whether there will continue to arise individuals and groups who would do all that need be done to weld India into a political community and to maintain and strengthen its sovereignty. This requires something more than military strength. It needs something more than economic might. Above all, it needs determination and wisdom—to compromise where compromise is necessary, howsoever unpalatable the conditions, but to stand firm where firmness is required.

French statesmen in the Fourth Republic were unable to part com-

pany with Algeria. They could not surrender their colony and years of heavy sacrifices were made willingly in trying to subjugate the Algerians. But the press was increasing political instability at home until de Gaulle came to power with the avowed determination to bring about the decolonisation of the French empire. Tolerance is generally a necessary condition for the existence of a political community which must be voluntary and all-inclusive. It does involve the softening of many egotisms—individual, regional, linguistic and religious. It is not easy to soften these. They have to be overcome by force or persuasion or by gradual attrition.

#### Changing Attitudes

Perhaps, the most encouraging feature of the scene in India is the constant transformation of religious attitudes and of communal politics. The contrast may be seen more clearly in comparing the Hindu Mahasabha with the Jana Sangh. The former considers the latter to be a traitor to the cause of a genuine Hindu State in India. The basic value of the Mahasabha is Hindu civilization. According to its adherents, however, the basic principle of the Jana Sangh is nationalism and not Hinduism. Therefore, they regard the Jana Sangh as a secular organisation, not a truly religious one.

The Hindu Mahasabha may be less dangerous but it was more consistent and more reactionary. The amounts of traditionalism (or religion) and modernism (or secularism) have varied throughout the past decades and it seems that the forces of modernism have been gaining the upper-hand. It is not clear that they have won a decisive victory but the trend is in that direction and any seeming victory of the traditionalist or communalist forces is bound to be temporary but it might be bloody.

In sum, the picture in India is very complicated and the equation between secularism and theocracy covers only one part of the political picture. However, the State is a secular power but it may not

be secular-minded. The definition of secularism as independence of religion is derived from the historical accident of the emergence of modern States in Europe at a time when the Church was dominant and the State had to win its independence in struggle against the Church.

#### Self-Responsibility

Secular-mindedness in politics may be defined as the determination (and the ability) to sustain an autonomous political community. This involves the recognition of self-responsibility. Tolerance of different religious faiths (or religion generally), howsoever worthy and necessary it may be, is a secondary issue. The overcoming of egotisms—personal, linguistic, regional and religious—is necessary if the political community is to flourish. This is a difficult task and it requires acceptance of a political ideal which subsumes the egotisms, transforms them into something higher and more desirable. India has not yet produced or accepted such a new political faith or way of life. Communalism in India reflects the lack. Secularism is a political faith, but the acceptance of it is a by-product of a paniment or by-product of a

Finally, what would be the impact of continuing political freedom in India upon the beliefs of the people? And no less important: what would be the impact of industrialism on religion? Something is certain. Religion will not disappear. In some sense, religious faith may be strengthened.

To some it may appear that religious faith would become marginal or superfluous. Christian the industrialised countries hardly agree that industrial political democracy or the State have weakened their religious faith. There is no reason to believe that political secularism and religion would not flourish side by side in India in the decades to come.

MODERNISATION IN  
Wilfred Cantwell Smith  
Asia Publishing House

THE CONCEPT OF THE  
By V. K. Prakash  
Oxford University Press

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## MODERNISATION IN A TRADITIONAL SOCIETY By

Wilfred Cantwell Smith.  
Asia Publishing House, Bombay.

## THE CONCEPT OF THE SECULAR STATE AND INDIA

By V. V. Prakash Luthera.  
Oxford University Press, Bombay.

Not so long ago, Wilfred Cantwell Smith delivered three lectures on the 'Modernisation of a Traditional Society', at Sapru House in New Delhi. Cantwell Smith doesn't define a traditional society, but equates it to Afro-Asian countries, thus, perhaps unwittingly, concealing the economic-political character of these countries. He seems to forget that every country in the world is traditional in that it has got its own traditions, and talks as though outside the Afro-Asian pale, no other country has any traditions. He treats tradition with Jehovah-like respect, as something permanent and for ever, an absolute category, which it is not; it changes with time and reflects the socio-economic and political changes.

When defining the term 'modern', Cantwell Smith 'demolishes' various views of what is modern. But what he 'demolishes' are only vague, popular notions. All that's latest isn't modern and all that's modern isn't beneficial, are the homilies he lays down at the end of his demolition work. Israel and Pakistan are new, but a State based on religion is a concept centuries old. Cantwell Smith's amazing examples for the second homily are industrial slums and fascism, neither very beneficial to humanity. The Cantwell Smith definition is that modernity is a process of

consciousness of what is happening in one's own country, and of what is possible to achieve combined with a free choice of one or any of the alternative possibilities.

Modernisation is the achievement of the possible in a particular way, in a way 'that conduces to still more freedom and more knowledge', 'that leads to greater knowledge, greater freedom and greater mundane welfare.'

Being a self-conscious lover of human freedom, Cantwell Smith believes in the choice. But he doesn't notice that the free choice he postulates here is restricted, in general, to (a) the present knowledge, and (b) to the immediately possible alternatives, and in particular, (c) to the way that leads to greater knowledge, freedom, etc. By the time these restrictions are imposed, three quarters of the freedom of 'free choice' is gone. The remaining quarter of freedom is the freedom of decision to act or not to act. Once the 'free choice' of decision is made, even that quarter of the freedom of the 'free choice' is also gone.

One doesn't know what to make of Cantwell Smith's freedom and free choice. In contrast, Marxism stands for the achievement of the possible in a way that leads to greater mundane welfare of the entire people, by abolishing exploitation by increasing knowledge of the potentialities of nature and of man so that men are increasingly free from exploitation and material want and so free to realise their potentialities, i.e., their human being. And yet

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Not so long ago, Wilfred Cantwell Smith lectured on the 'demolishes' various what he 'demolishes'. All that's latest isn't beneficial, and end of his demolition, but a State, centuries old. Cantwell's second homily, neither very benevolent nor very Smith definition



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**MODERNISATION IN A TRADITIONAL SOCIETY** By  
Wilfred Cantwell Smith.  
Asia Publishing House, Bombay.

**THE CONCEPT OF THE SECULAR STATE AND INDIA**  
By V. V. Prakash Luthera.  
Oxford University Press, Bombay.

Not so long ago, Wilfred Cantwell Smith delivered three lectures on the 'Modernisation of a Traditional Society', at Sapru House in New Delhi. Cantwell Smith doesn't define a traditional society, but equates it to Afro-Asian countries, thus, perhaps unwittingly, concealing the economic-political character of these countries. He seems to forget that every country in the world is traditional in that it has got its own traditions, and talks as though outside the Afro-Asian, pale, no other country has any traditions. He treats tradition with Jehovah-like respect, as something permanent and for ever, an absolute category, which it is not; it changes with time and reflects the socio-economic and political changes.

When defining the term 'modern', Cantwell Smith 'demolishes' various views of what is modern. But what he 'demolishes' are only vague, popular notions. All that's latest isn't modern and all that's modern isn't beneficial, are the homilies he lays down at the end of his demolition work. Israel and Pakistan are new, but a State based on religion is a concept centuries old. Cantwell Smith's amazing examples for the second homily are industrial slums and fascism, neither very beneficial to humanity. The Cantwell Smith definition is that modernity is a process of

consciousness of what is happening in one's own country, and of what is possible to achieve combined with a free choice of one or any of the alternative possibilities.

Modernisation is the achievement of the possible in a particular way, in a way 'that conduces to still more freedom and more knowledge', 'that leads to greater knowledge, greater freedom and greater mundane welfare.'

Being a self-conscious lover of human freedom, Cantwell Smith believes in the choice. But he doesn't notice that the free choice he postulates here is restricted, in general, to (a) the present knowledge, and (b) to the immediately possible alteration, and in particular, (c) to the way that leads to greater knowledge, freedom, etc. By the time these restrictions are imposed, three quarters of the freedom of 'free choice' is gone. The remaining quarter of freedom is the freedom of decision to act or not to act. Once the 'free choice' of decision is made, even that quarter of the freedom of the 'free choice' is also gone.

One doesn't know what to make of Cantwell Smith's freedom and free choice. In contrast, Marxism stands for the achievement of the possible in a way that leads to greater mundane welfare of the entire people, by abolishing exploitation by increasing knowledge of the potentialities of nature and of man so that men are increasingly free from exploitation and material want and so free to realise their potentialities, i.e., their human being. And yet

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Cantwell Smith comes down on Marxism. Being a scholar, he has to reveal his awareness of the existence of Marxism, however little or distorted it may be. He thinks that ideas exist before what he calls 'economics and technology', and re-affirms the primacy of ideas over matter, and of intellectual questions over economic and technological ones. He then confidently adds, 'Marx was simply wrong in his dogma that matter precedes thought.'

As any serious student of Marxism knows, what Marx said was, that before thought can arise, there must be a thinking brain and senses to help the brain, and things for the brain and senses to act upon. Unless Cantwell Smith can demonstratively prove that he can produce his thoughts without his senses and his brain, and without things like economics and technology or society, there is no reason to accept his pronouncement that Marx was simply wrong. Marx, Cantwell Smith should note, never under-rated human thought, the force of ideas or ideologies. As Marx in an oft-quoted passage in *Capital* says, the bee builds its hive by instinct, but the architect has the entire building in his mind before it exists outside his mind.

Cantwell Smith should also note that Marx didn't talk of the primacy of 'economics and technology', but of the interaction of productive forces and productive relations of an epoch constituting its method of production and distribution operation within the context of all ideology accumulated up to that epoch.

Cantwell Smith should also note that thought, the moment it comes out of the thinker's mind, becomes an objective material fact, to be acted upon, like matter, economics, technology, etc. Followers of Marxism have understood the Marxist theory about ideas, and Cantwell Smith's admission that they have paid 'enormous, active attention to the role of ideology,' obviously contradicts what he has said about Marx.

This coil of contradiction is complete when Cantwell Smith says, 'And I think it can be shown both in theory and in practice that on this point the Communists are right and we have been wrong.' One could, perhaps, remind Cantwell Smith of one of his well-expressed thoughts: 'Any intellectual is pretty vacuous who does not recognise, first, that his ideas may be wrong, and, second, that if they are wrong, his society will suffer as a result.'

Cantwell Smith deals with the role of intellectuals and the moral and religious aspects of modernisation. Although at one stage he gives an all-purveying, all-determining, demi-god's place to the intellectual, at the end of his third lecture he says, 'No one may tell the moralist what to choose. Yet the intellectual may, by theoretical analysis, show the moralist in what direction he must look, if his morality is to be dynamically modern and free.'

What then is the role of the intellectual and the moralist in modernisation? Here's Cantwell Smith's answer for what it's worth: 'It is up to the country's

intellectual leaders to make people aware, up to the country's or villages' moral leaders persuade them that the choice is an exceedingly important one morally; and to advise them on one of the many alternatives it is best to choose, the actual choice itself, however, is made not by leaders but by every man.'

The author does not have much to say about secularism except this: '... the progress of secularism will, so far as I can discern, move forward more smoothly and effectively, and will move forward only if secularism and its problems are conceptualised, clarified, and intellectually wrestled with, and action taken in the light of greatly increased awareness. What that awareness is to be, he discusses a little later: '... a secularism that is purely negative, irreligious, rejecting or setting aside the morality and faith of religion, (as much modern history shows), prove pretty destructive. The morality and the faith of India to accompany the material aspects of the modernising process and to vivify it, may be Hindu and Moslem, and Sikh and Christian, or they may be secular in the Greco-Western sense or in a new Indian style. It is up to the religious and moral leaders including the devotedly secular, leaders of India to work this out.'

In the second book under review, Luthera examines the concept of the secular State to establish its precise meaning, and then shows how inapplicable the term is in reference to India. The long short of Luthera's thesis is that India is not a secular State, cannot be a secular State, and can only be a jurisdictional State.

As is the norm in most Ph.D theses, Luthera, which examines first the origins of the concept of a secular State. According to him, 'the philosophical foundations for the concept were laid in a sermon of St. Mark's Gospel XIII: 7 which recorded in St. Mark's Gospel XIII: 7 which rendered to Caesar the things that are Caesar's State—that to God the things that are God's.' This origin is far-fetched—it's like looking for atom bombs in the *Atharva Veda* and the *Mahabharata*. After all, the concept of the secular State, as is understood today, is not even two centuries old by Luthera's showing. Since the first secular State in the modern sense was that of the USA, '... an almost exclusive emphasis has been laid on the example of the USA as a model and other constitutions ... where relevant.' Immediately Luthera petently adds, 'This does not, however, affect the soundness of the argument of his study.'

So far as the USSR, which also professes to be a secular State, is concerned, Luthera observes that it is difficult to say how the separation of the State and the Church has been interpreted, if at all, in the judicial tribunals in the USSR. No information is available on the subject. But ... it is clear that the article aims at separating the State



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hese features are to be found in the US  
Court cases, Luthera theorises that any  
tion that is without them is ipso-facto not  
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Two of his book shows, again mostly through  
interpretation, that the Indian Constitution  
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they are useless, just because they are  
to the Hindu community. For all these omis-  
and commissions the Indian State is not a  
State—that is Luther's first conclusion.

arguing on these lines, Luther is only grappling  
the tail, not with the horns of the problem.  
ad of studying how the concept of the secular  
is evolving under Indian historical conditions.  
kes the U.S. Constitution for a model to judge  
by. Using similar methods, one could take  
and to be the best model of democracy and then  
to the conclusion that India is not a democracy  
use it has no Royalty and because it has a fully  
ten Constitution, etc., etc. Concepts like the  
lar State and democracy are not immutable;  
are processes differently emerging in different  
orical conditions, acquiring new meaning and  
ent. When they are not examined in the con-  
of these historical conditions, they result in  
sided conclusions.

Moreover, the Indian Constitution is not even  
enty years old. No new generations trained in the  
cept of the secular State have yet come to ru  
State and judiciary apparatus. And in a vast,  
backward and almost illiterate country like ours, it  
es several generations for the secular State to

come of age. Even then, it need not and will not  
have the same features as the U.S. Constitution.

In order, probably, to justify his first conclusion  
that India is not a secular State, Luthera draws  
a yet more damaging conclusion. He says: 'The fact  
is that it is neither possible nor desirable to have a  
secular State in India under the present circum-  
stances.' This is impossible and undesirable because  
a secular State, in order to be secular, must have  
in it a well-organised Church, which is not the case  
in India. So India must always be jurisdictional  
as it is now. Thus has Luthera divined the present  
and decided the future character of the Indian State

Kusum Madgavkar

#### SOME ASPECTS OF RELIGION AND POLITICS IN INDIA DURING THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Khaliq Ahmad Nizami.

Asia Publishing House, Bombay.

In his Foreword to the book under review,  
Dr. Colin Davies says that the increasing output  
on Indian history by Indians since Independence is  
an encouraging trend. This is correct. But the  
quality of that output is quite another matter.  
History is being rewritten from a largely communal  
viewpoint for the edification of a particular com-  
munal group. For instance, some Indian historians  
have unduly exaggerated the use of force as an  
element in the conversion of Hindus to Islam. They  
have presented idyllic pictures of life in India before  
the arrival of Islam, while glossing over such facts  
of the Indian social life as the caste system. Others  
have denied the use of force as an agent for securing  
conversions.

In this see-saw of conflicting communal viewpoints  
the very purpose of history is forgotten. History  
has long ceased to be merely a chronicle of events  
in which kings and emperors have loomed large.  
Instead, history has become increasingly the story  
of a people living in a particular society: the way  
in which they earned their livelihood; the inter-  
relationship between various groups in that society;  
their religion and beliefs, customs and traditions;  
their arts and crafts; their ideas and ideals; the stage  
of civilization attained by them; the social and pol-  
itical system under which they lived; and the response  
of the social organism as a whole and of its con-  
stituents to the problems posed before them. Else-  
where, every aspect of social life has been subjected  
to a searching scientific analysis. This as yet remains  
to be done for Indian history.

Judged by the test of a scientific conception of his-  
tory, the volume under discussion leaves much to  
be desired. There is erudition and scholarship; there  
is an attempt at a rational approach to history; there  
are innumerable references to contemporary sources;  
there is the compilation of a vast mass of facts  
if to overawe the reader. But, the book is weak  
in its analysis and interpretation of painstakingly  
gathered facts. Why? It is because there is no

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underlying philosophy of history; no overview of the social phenomena under discussion.

In his introduction to the book, Professor Habib remarks that the author has prefaced his work by an excellent analysis of the Islamic Revolution. One really wishes it were so. As a matter of fact, this section is the weakest part of the book. Beyond a bold statement that the rise and spread of Islam was a world historic event, there is little else. One looks in vain for an account of the conditions which caused this epoch making phenomenon, and of the people in whose midst Islam was born. The origin of Islam appears like a bolt from the blue—so brusquely is it introduced without so much as even a reference to the conditions which caused its birth. Nehru and Wells have dealt with this question more competently.

One looks in vain for an answer to the question: why did Christianity and Judaism fail to make a headway among the Arabs? What was the specific attraction of Islam for the Arabs? Instead of explaining the origin and growth of Islam in the light of the then existing social conditions, there is a lot of talk about the revolutionary significance of the principle of Islamic monotheism and its unequalled extension to social life. But monotheism was not the monopoly of Islam. Why did contemporary monotheistic religions—Christianity and Judaism—fail to cast their spell over the Arabs? The differentia of Islam was not its monotheism but its stand on human equality as far as it was possible under the then existing social conditions.

Was it the paucity of material or was it deference to the feelings of his co-religionists which prevented the author from presenting a rational, coherent account of the Prophet? Why does he seek a metaphysical explanation for the origin and growth of Islam? How can one account for the lack of sufficient explanation about the civil war which followed soon after the rise of Islam? Was the point at issue mainly theological?

There are examples of loose and confused thinking. The Prophet was not an Arab nationalist, but in the years during which he was in charge of the government at Medina he eliminated all Arab tribal conflicts and organized a fairly classless and egalitarian society. (Professor Habib in the Introduction). 'Out of this crude society the Prophet evolved the political structure of Islam and established a working class republic in Medina.' The Prophet was born in a classless, egalitarian, tribal society. It was the social milieu in which he lived and worked. It had its opportunities and its limitations. The Prophet's achievement was that he succeeded in transforming it and giving it a new direction. By providing the feuding Arab tribes with the basis for an ideological unity, Islam helped in creating among them the consciousness of belonging to a common nationality.

It is in the creation of the consciousness of a common nationality among the Arabian tribes that the real significance of Islam lies. But the conditions

were not ripe for the creation of an Arab State. Soon the tribes fell apart and were engaged in a civil war. Was the main issue theological? It appears not to be so. Here was a conflict between the old forces of a tribal society and the new ones which arose as a result of changing conditions within the tribal society. This conflict resulted in the break-up of the old tribal society and its replacement by a different type of social structure, more responsive to new needs than the earlier tribal one. A social epoch had ended and a new one begun.

All history may and may not be the history of class struggle. But an understanding of classes is relevant to an understanding of history. The class struggle was not invented by Marx. Nor was he the first to recognize it. A nodding acquaintance with Marxism is not a sufficient qualification for an historian.

It is not quite clear what the author means when he says that the Islamic revolution was urban in character. The account of life in Medina under the Prophet has the same element of uncritical adulation which is to be found in some historians' account of life in ancient India.

One of the merits of the book is that it traces clearly the rise of a landed aristocracy and the part played by it. In the section on the political structure of Islam, there is very little discussion on the political and social principles enunciated in the *Koran*. Perhaps this is wise. The empire which arose was as Islamic as the Holy Roman Empire was 'holy'. The Islamic medieval polity was as much based on the *Koran* as the ancient Hindu polity in India was based on the *Dharmashastras*. In each case, the State's policy was formulated mainly on political considerations and expediency rather than on any lofty ideological considerations.

Islamic law remained petrified because it was considered immutable and valid for all times. What was relevant in a tribal society fired with the zeal of a unifying ideology had ceased to be relevant under the changed conditions of a feudal society.

Of considerable interest is the account given by the author of the rationalist movement in Islam which has been correctly represented as having popular and progressive character.

Discussing the *Iqta* system, the author states that it helped to liquidate feudalism in India. In fact the *Iqta* is nothing but a modified form of feudalism. The founders of the Sultanate made use of the *Iqta* system to keep the turbulent Turkish military ruling class in check. But this did not basically alter the feudal character of society in India under Sultanate.

The Muslim Ulemas were certainly not an ordered priesthood. Poor teachers they might have been. But poverty and conservatism may co-exist. It is indeed difficult to hold a brief, as the author does for these Ulemas who constituted the bedrock of Islamic conservatism. The author has also displ



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asizes the major contribution of Britain to India's English education brought with it new ways of thinking and revived the spirit of criticism. Even here irrational institutions like caste, untouchability and the inferior status of women were defended, it was significant that such justification was no longer on the basis of old texts but in the language of the new thought.

But this vehicle of reform also had its limitations; it was the exclusive preserve of a small intellectual elite. Even 'national' movements such as the Congress failed to reach the masses. The democracy visualized was no doubt a government by the educated upper classes, the new aristocracy of intellect and wealth. It was for this reason that Aurobindo's warning to the Moderates that the nationalists would come knocking at the door of Congress with a nation behind them failed to materialise. The masses were to remain dormant for another decade until Gandhi infused them with the spirit of unity.

Reformers in the 19th century strove for the emergence and success of nationalism and social reform, the latter being regarded as an essential pre-requisite for political advance. The first decades of the 20th century saw the broadening of participation at all levels of Indian life culminating in the growing awareness of national identity and a step forward towards the realisation of the aspirations of the social reforms.

Professor Heimsath traces clearly the development of social reform and its increasing importance in political life during the last century. In particular, he brings out the regional differences of each of the major provinces in which reform flourished. His book gives a valuable account of an important intellectual scene, the effects of which we are even today experiencing.

Kamalbir Singh

MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN GUJARAT By S. C. Misra. Asia Publishing House, Bombay.

The advent of Islam brought the most epoch-making change in the warp and woof of Indian life. While it stirred the placid waters of the birth-deterred, caste-ridden, Hindu society, it underwent in process imperceptible indigenisation, presenting a mosaic of symbiotic communities. 'What factors led to the formation of these communities, especially communities which were converted from Hinduism? What were the changes which Islam wrought in the life and manners of these people? How far did the neo-converts Islamise? . . . How and in what manner did Indian Islam shape itself not only ideational and cultural spheres but in the social personal spheres?'—questions such as these in the context of a given region are posed and sought answered in *Muslim Communities in Gujarat*.

The first part of the book sketches in brief the historical background of Islam in Gujarat. The

Hindu rulers were tolerant, catholic and secular in their treatment of Muslim immigrants and local converts to Islam. During the reign of Siddharaj Jayasingha (1094-1143), for instance, a mosque demolished by 'fire-worshippers' was re-built at State expense and the miscreants were severely punished. Such was the charisma of Siddharaj Jayasingha's personality among his Muslim subjects that three of the prominent Muslim communities, namely, the Bohras, Khojahs and Sunnis, claim to have converted him to their respective faiths.

Strange as it may seem, the first spell of the persecution of community started at the hands of a Sunni convert, Ja'far. 'Mosques,' in consequence, 'were closed for lack of attendance and harassment of the faithful mounted in intensity.' (p. 23). In 1518, about three quarters of a century later, the wali, Mulla Raja, was executed by the then Sunni Sultan. Until the fall of the Sultanate of Gujarat when it gave way to Mughal rule, *namaz* could not be read openly in mosques.

Aurangzeb's rule as *subedar* and later as emperor brought a fresh wave of persecution for the community. Syedna Qutab Khan was executed and his successor, Syedna Pir Khan, humiliated in prison. Bohra women were asked 'to wear ivory bangles and their menfolk to smoke tobacco pipes and trim beards, like the Mughal nobles. For mosques, Sunni *Pesh-Imams* (prayer leaders) were appointed and those who failed to attend were punished.' (p. 34).

In addition, 'teachers for educating the Bohras, both old and young, were to be appointed in every *pargana* and town and they were to be compulsorily taught the tenets of the Sunni faith—monthly tests were to be given to them. . . Regular progress reports of this educational campaign were to be forwarded to the Emperor.' Every care was taken to see that 'prohibited practices were forced upon the Bohras and the enjoined ones prohibited.' (p. 35).

The Sunni persecution of the Bohras, the proliferation of Islam into endogamous communities, the fear of plebian infiltration among the high-ups in their hierarchy, the conflicting loyalties to schismatic *pirs* and communal mentors and the retention of time-honoured customs, costumes and rituals by Hindu converts to Islam made wide breaches in its egalitarian, monotheistic ethos. The doctrine of proximity transcended the caste configurations in matrimonial matters, but it was more a homage to power and pelf than an adherence to democratic brotherhood preached by Islam.

While the caste system crept into Muslim communities, it is incorrect to say that it got entrenched into them as among the Hindus. Social mobility among them was quick and more easy, for they did not recognise any clear-cut contours of a stratified hierarchy nor was caste sanctioned by religion or tradition.

Three processes, the study concludes, are working simultaneously upon the Muslim communities in



a considerable ingenuity in trying to explain away the *jeziya*.

The book provides a well-documented insight into the lives of the Muslim mystics and the organization of the mystic orders. The author is right when he characterizes them as a popular and progressive element in Islam for it was in the 'Khanquahs' of the mystics that the spirit of free enquiry and debate, of free thought and protest was kept alive. But it is difficult to concur with his opinion that Islamic mysticism was purely Islamic in origin.

There is an element of evasion in the author's attempt to discuss the issue of force as an element in conversion. The issue is sought to be by-passed. The use of force is certainly underestimated. The Hindu under the Sultanate was at best a *Zimmi*. His life, religion and property were secure as long as he paid the *Jeziya*. He was a second class citizen. But so was the Indian Muslim. In this feudal society, it was the Turkish military-cum-landed aristocracy which enjoyed a privileged position. In the last analysis it was on the arms of this class that the fragile structure of a flimsy empire rested.

The author asserts that the religious literature produced by the mystics contains valuable accounts of the life of the common people under the Sultanate. It is to be regretted that we are treated with very scanty evidence from this source.

P. V.

**INDIAN NATIONALISM AND HINDU SOCIAL REFORM** By Charles H. Heimsath.  
Princeton University Press, 1904.

In this book, which covers the period of the nineteenth century renaissance in India from the time of Raja Ram Mohan Roy to the First World War, Professor Heimsath discusses the history of social and religious reform and its relation to the emergence of nationalism.

India has throughout its long cultural history experienced many reform movements; the Bhakti Movements, and Sikhism come to mind as obvious, recent examples. The distinguishing feature of the 19th century reform movement is that it originated from secular motives based on a rational criticism of society. It was essentially western in outlook, inspired by those who had through education or travel come into contact with western ideas.

The movement had its beginnings in the desire of individuals to reshape their personal lives according to western standards. People such as Ram Mohan Roy and K. C. Sen were men of flaming zeal whose motto was, in Voltaire's words, '*Ecrasez L'infame*'. Hindu social institutions, especially caste and enforced widowhood, represented the infamous whereas English society with its calm self-assurance and distrust of theology and speculation seemed an ideal which modern India should set before itself. Apart from education, there was also the influence exercised by the Christian missionaries whose insistent demands to enact social legislation to rid

Hindu society of its abuses, established a pattern of agitation for future reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy's campaign against *Sati*.

However, the social reformers who based themselves on the missionary approach, while they prepared the ground for the purification of Hindu society were, generally speaking, out of sympathy with the Indian mind.

But the struggle required to adopt reformed customs, e.g., widow re-marriage and the abolition of child marriage, which was much more difficult than the mere intellectual acceptance of new ideas. There was some truth in Sir William Wedderburn's observation that it was easier for an educated Indian to affect the thinking of the British Secretary of State than his own mother-in-law.

Professor Heimsath regards this as the first stage of the reform movement. However, by the 1880s a new period in India's intellectual life was emerging with the formation of the Indian National Congress and the National Social Conference. There was no single unified movement but rather several local and competing nationalisms. Thus 'The Mother' the spiritual embodiment of the country whose worship Bankim Chatterjee urged, was not India but Bengal.

During this period, there was a shift in emphasis from social reform to political reform. The liberal-democratic and secular approach of the moderate leadership, responsible for the founding of the Congress, was challenged in the 1890s by extremists such as Tilak and Aurobindo Ghose who believed that unity could be rapidly achieved among Indians who recognised their common heritage as a single religious community. The basic issue dividing the extremists from the social reformers was that of the proper source from which the nation should derive its ideals. Should the standards defining the goals be western or Indian?

The answer given to this question, ushered in the third stage in intellectual development: the reconstruction of nationalism under the leadership of the Hindu revivalists. One obvious characteristic of the reconstructed nationalism was an increasing disenchantment among educated Indians with western inspired social and political ideals.

Social reform began to mean a regeneration of the traditional spirit of the nation, a regeneration political as well as social, founded on religious revival. Criticism of society was based on the failure of national social life to realise its own potentialities and not in its inferior performance in comparison with western society. 'National' in any context no longer meant exclusively Hindu and the formation of the Muslim League in 1906 bore witness to the success of extremists such as Lajpat Rai and Tilak in exercising dominance within the Congress movement.

These are the three stages into which Professor Heimsath divides the period. Throughout, he



Gujarat, viz., Islamisation, rationalisation and westernisation. These communities are thus seen to be discarding non-Islamic doctrines and practices; are veering round to simple ceremonies which entail frugality; and the educated among them are taking to western dress and mode of living.

The book is a solid piece of research in the historical-sociological spectrum of Muslim communities in Gujarat. It provides a rich introduction to depth studies which may yield rewarding information not yet known. Its value thus lies in exploring a field that is promising for researchers in history and sociology and not in what it itself says or describes. Some of the possible lacunae may also be briefly recorded.

Part II of the volume is in the nature of an anticlimax to Part I. While Part I is obviously the product of a painstaking research by an eminent historian, Part II seems to be a descriptive account based on the socio-economic survey of a College Planning Forum.

The study stresses again and again an unmistakable trend towards Islamisation among the Muslim communities in Gujarat. With the bonds of religion loosening in the world, and for that matter in India too, this seems rather incongruous and, therefore, calls for a convincing explanation. While we find some sporadic attempts at explaining it, the reader is not provided with a coherent and systematic body of reasoned thought to justify this paradox.

The study was undertaken between July 1959 and March 1961 and yet we find little, if any, reference to the impact of partition on the individual psyche of the communities under study. The last chapter, 'Social Change in Recent Years,' ignores the socio-political perspective and is at best an academic exercise.

The contingency for 'additional notes and corrections' on pp. 185 and 186 should better have been avoided. The few printing errors, not yet noticed by the publishers, too, fall in this category.

The 'Glossary of Indian Terms' might have served its purpose better if it were given at the beginning of the book, for that would have ensured its use by even, an unwary reader.

H. S.

**INDIAN MUSLIMS. A POLITICAL HISTORY (1858-1947)** By Ram Gopal.

Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1959.

**BRITAIN AND MUSLIM INDIA: A study of British public opinion vis-a-vis the development of Muslim nationalism in India, 1857-1947.** By K. K. Aziz.

Heinemann, London, 1963.

These two books deal with a subject which has never ceased to interest scholars in India and Pakistan since the days of partition. Partition, which has left a legacy of problems to both the nations and which caused considerable misery to millions, has attracted the attention of numerous writers from

both sides. The nearness of the events often clouds the judgment and perhaps no account is completely free from bias. The authors of the two books under review realise the delicacy of the task of narrating the events very soon after they had taken place. Their studies are confined to a very important period in Indian history, a period during which the Muslims emerged as an important political factor after the eclipse in the 1857 Mutiny.

The approaches of Ram Gopal and Aziz differ fundamentally. Ram Gopal attempts to emphasise that Hindus and Muslims were closer to each other till later events separated them and holds the view that at various stages of the Indian national struggle they had come together. Aziz, on the other hand, considers that the two communities were never close together and it was a 'myth' to talk of the Indian nation. Thus, while Ram Gopal argues that pre-1857 India was a battlefield with communalism arrayed against nationalism, and with nationalism losing along the line, Aziz questions the very basis of the argument.

Long before the Muslims came as conquerors in the north, they came to southern coastal areas as traders. They settled down quietly and were even able to gain considerable following among the local people. As it happened, later in Bengal, the methods of peaceful persuasion gained a larger number of followers than the forcible conversion attempted elsewhere in the north later. The importance of the Muslims in the political sphere begun with the establishment of the Mughal empire. Understandably, they dominated in every sphere, but the edifice of the Muslim nobility was violently disturbed with the rise of the British power in India.

A series of events, beginning with the introduction of the Permanent Settlement in 1793, the replacement of Persian by Bengali as the official language and, later, the replacement of Bengali by English steadily undermined Muslim influence everywhere. The new system of education introduced in the second half of the 19th century, failed to attract the Muslim aristocracy; but, as Ram Gopal points out, Muslim commoners went in for English education. 'They were not averse to receive secular education with Hindus.'

Curiously, the aversion of the Muslim aristocracy to the new system of education was interpreted as an aversion of the entire Muslim community. A number of causes have been attributed to this aversion. In the ultimate analysis, jobs were the cause of differences over language and script. Ram Gopal argues that the rift which was caused between the two communities towards the end of the last century gradually widened.

Leading Muslim leaders were themselves aware of the fact that the attitude of the Muslim aristocracy would have to change and a high school for Muslim boys was begun at Aligarh in 1875. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan had taken the initiative and he succeeded in



mirably. Aligarh became the centre of Muslim education and later developed into a centre of political activity.

What was the general attitude of the Muslim community to the national movement in the initial stages? Aziz in his book argues that it had nothing to do with the Indian National Congress. The Muslim delegates were present at the annual congresses but their strength steadily declined. But Aziz does not describe the reasons for the decline. Ram Gopal points out that the strength of the Muslim delegates had been steady, except for two or three years, and this in spite of the intense activities in Aligarh to have a separate organization called the Moham-medan Political Organization. The fact was that until differences asserted themselves later the Muslim community continued to be attracted to the National Congress.

The turn of the century saw several developments which led to the stiffening of the attitude of the two communities towards each other. Revivalist movements like the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj, participation in the Ganapati festival and Shivaji festival, all had their role in widening the gulf between the two communities. Ram Gopal further adds that the 'government had a hand in the mischievous propaganda. By 1905 the number of Muslims in the annual Congress session had fallen to 17 out of 756 delegates. Till then the National Congress was able to attract the Muslim communities. But by that time the Muslims were seeking a "purely Muslim all-India organization." And this was provided by the Muslim League which was founded in 1906.

The story of the founding of the League and the introduction of reforms by the British to placate the demands of the nationalists is too well known to be repeated. These reforms however did not satisfy the Muslim communities nor the Congress. Congress leaders were still trying their best to prevent the two communities falling apart and were bent on bringing them together in the national struggle. Their efforts, particularly the efforts of Gandhi, bore fruit and the two communities came together in the Khilafat movement. For a time the extremist wings in the Congress and the League forgot their differences and were prepared to cooperate under Gandhi.

But, as Ram Gopal points out, 'the nationalist organizations and Muslim organizations had come together as two distinct parties, with Gandhi as the common link, but with the old background of communal politics; the adherence of Muslims to Pan-Islamic and other communal concepts and the pronounced antagonism to these of Hindus, were causes of future differences.'

The attitude of several Muslim leaders and, later, the activities of the Moplas in the Malabar coast, the Muslim communities' attempt at organizing *Tanzim* as an answer to the Shuddi movement preached by the Hindus, all led to the inevitable breach between

the communities. As Ram Gopal points out: 'Gar was undone. His comrades of the movement degenerated into watch dogs of narrow communal interests. Muslims were fast leaving Congress, since the Hindu Mahasabha never grew to be a model for the Muslim League, Muslims thought of the Congress as a Hindu organization and of the League as a Muslim organization.'

From that day it was clear that unity between the two organizations would never be possible. In the thirties the breach was complete. The Congress and the League now entered the decisive phases of their careers, the one for freedom and the other for Pakistan.

The political history of the last three decades before independence was one of rivalry between two powerful organizations and the British attempts at exploitation of this rivalry. Aziz analyses the attitude of the British from the Right, the Centre and the Left. He says that the conservatives (the Right) favoured the Muslim communities since they 'seem to find more in common between themselves and Islam as a religion than between themselves and Hinduism,' and because 'they had a better knowledge of India.'

Aziz puts people like Sir Henry Cotton, who opposed partition and Sir John Rees, who favoured it, and other such officials who had served in India for a long time and held different views, in the Centre group. Ramsay Macdonald, Fenner Brockway, H. N. Brailsford are placed under the Left criticised for their views on India. Aziz says that the British Left always supported the majority against the minority in colonial politics. In India supported the Hindus, in Ireland the Roman Catholics and in Cyprus the Greeks. He charges the British for creating the 'myth' of a united, secular India. Aziz's view, India in the pre-independence period was neither united nor secular.

Events of the twenties and the thirties are well known. Ram Gopal ably describes them and points out the factors that led to partition. Whether partition has solved the problem of the Hindus in India which were predominantly Muslim provinces and now part of Pakistan, and whether it has solved the problems of Muslims in areas which were predominantly Hindu provinces and now part of India is still a matter of dispute. Perhaps India is not yet a country which is secular in the classic sense.

S. Krishnam

THE IDEA OF A SECULAR SOCIETY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR CHRISTIANS. BY D. L. M. Oxford University Press, London, 1963.

This book is a collection of three essays on the idea of a secular society in contrast to the idea of a Christian society as propounded by Eliot in a quarter of a century ago, and the earlier ideas of Coleridge on the ideas of Church and State.



## Further reading

### PART I

#### General

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Cohen, A. A. Religion as a secular ideology. 'Partisan Review' 23: Fall 1956: 495-505.

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Lee, Robert and Marty, Martin E. Eds. Religion and social conflict. (Based on lectures given at the Institute of Ethics and Society at San



first essay considers the conception of a secular society and seeks to answer the question whether such a society is desirable from the Christian standpoint. The second essay discusses a secular society in the context of a dynamic world where clashes occur in the distribution of income and status. Finally, the third essay deals with the problems of a specialised Church in a secular society, with reference to the apparent irrelevance of religion and theology and the clericalization of the Church. These essays were delivered as the Riddle Memorial Lectures at Kings College in the University of Durham.

The term 'secular society' has been used to convey different meanings at different times. For example, in the nineteenth century, secularism, in the continental countries of Europe, was identified with an anti-clerical attitude, and the Secular Society of England was an association of confirmed atheists who denied the values of organized religion and carried out active propaganda against 'a belief in God. As a result of this tradition the idea still persists that a secular society is an irreligious society. The author, however, shows that there are five distinctive elements of a secular society.

In the first place, a secular society, though not necessarily irreligious, explicitly refuses to commit itself to any particular view of the nature of the universe and the place of man in it. Secondly, in contrast to the sacral societies which enforce, either by State coercion or by social pressures, a uniform attitude or behaviour in important matters of human values whether or not they are religious, a secular society is pluralistic and heterogeneous. Thirdly, a secular society is a tolerant and open society where there is no attempt either to impose beliefs or to limit the expression of beliefs.

Fourthly, while a secular society, like all human societies, has its own politico-economic institutions which impose their particular pattern on individual lives and social groups, the aim and influence of these institutions is greatly limited in it. Finally, the secular society has no common aims or a common set of images reflecting the common ideals and emotions of everyone; it is a society without any official images. The conception of the secular society is a significant contribution of the book.

The author makes a distinction between a secular society and a secular State. He says that society is wider than a State and its operation, and cites the example of English society to illustrate this distinction. In England, he says, the establishment of two Churches and the requirements of Biblical instruction in schools, as well as the favoured position of the established churches in the universities and the favoured position of all the churches in the broadcasting system make Britain a Christian State. It does not, however, necessarily follow from this that the English society is a Christian society.

The author argues that the establishment of the two Churches in England is only a vestigial survival

of the past and the place of religion in education is of more moment. In practice, there is no attempt in British society to cover up the actual divergences of beliefs and behaviour which are as evident in schools, universities and the broadcasting system as in any other sphere of life. In effect, the author concludes, for most important purposes British society is a secular society, where it makes little or no difference in what one's religion or morality consists.

The author believes that the distinction between society and State is a real one, and argues that a Christian society could indeed exist with a secular society which did not express Christian beliefs in any organized way, but today there certainly is no Christian society. It seems to me, however, that this can only be a conceptual difference and, in actual practice, society and the State cannot be completely separated.

India is, for example, a secular State because there is no official religion in India, no one is prevented from exercising his religion or professing it publicly, and there is no disability in respect of public office or power based on religion, but the society has an undoubted religious orientation. As a result, the emergence of a secular State in India is riddled with difficulties. First, there is the question of protecting the rights of minority communities which prefer religions other than Hinduism. Second, there is the problem of dealing with the more extreme adherents of Hinduism who, in their fanaticism, might jeopardise the security of the minorities. The latter inevitability necessitates some kind of guidance. In a country with a large illiterate majority, the task of educating the people in selected values of tolerance and equality etc., can be performed effectively only by agencies which are directly or indirectly sponsored by the State.

The author concludes that a secular State and society which accepts the clash of different views about ethics and patterns of life as they in fact exist, conforms to the Christian view of human life as much as any more uniform pattern. The author is a Protestant and it is not surprising that he should have reached this conclusion. The Protestant Church is an open society where there is place for the clash of opinion and pursuit of truth in diverse forms.

The Catholic Church, on the other hand, is a monolithic structure and many of the higher clergy and bishops in the Catholic world still have an instinctively authoritarian state of mind, thinking in terms of repressions, banning and censorship. Although the Catholic Church is also increasingly becoming an open society, it will be a long time before the ideas and attitudes of the new-style Catholic intellectuals filter down to most of the clergy and the mass. It appears premature, at least at the present stage, to suggest that the Catholic Church is a secular society although the description is certainly true of the Protestant and other liberal churches.

Imtiaz Ahmad



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GAUTAM CHAT

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# RABINDRANATH TAGORE ON THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM

GAUTAM CHATTOPADHYAY

## I

RABINDRANATH Tagore, in the best sense of the word, was an intensely religious man, but his concept of religion made him a great humanist and an untiring, passionate critic of narrow outlook and religious bigotry. Delivering the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford in 1929-30, the poet summed up his religious outlook: "In the depth of our being, there dwells the eternal spirit of human unity beyond our direct knowledge. It very often contradicts the trivialities of our daily life and upsets the arrangements made for securing our personal exclusiveness behind the walls of individual habits and superficial conventions. It inspires in us works that are the expressions of a universal spirit; it invokes unexpectedly in the midst of a self-centred life, supreme sacrifice. At its call, we hasten to dedicate our lives to the cause of truth and beauty, to unrewarded service of others..."<sup>1</sup>

Basically then, this was the outlook which enabled the poet to have an objective view of the Hindu-Muslim problem in India. The poet's father Devendranath, brought up the young son in the ideas of the Upanishads which gave the poet a truly Indian as well as universal outlook and kept him away from the camp of Hindu bigotry.

## II

At the beginning of the Twentieth Century, when partition of Bengal on communal lines was on the agenda, thanks to the sinister machinations of an alien imperialist power, Tagore tried to tell some blunt home-

truths to his western-educated compatriots. He tried to point out that much of the Hindu-Muslim bitterness was the creation of British rule in India and was being fostered by the English educated middle class, but the common people were substantially free from such bitterness across the centuries. Tagore wrote: "Across the centuries, a bridge was being erected between Hindus and Muslims and both the societies were finding common meeting grounds. The best examples of such meeting grounds can be found in the teaching of Nanak, Kabir and the Vaishnavas. If our educated elite kept track of the social developments among our common folk, they would have found that attempt to strengthen Hindu-Muslim unity and harmony was constantly going on at the base."<sup>2</sup> (Translated from the Bengali original—G.C.)

In the appendix to the same famous article, Tagore further wrote: "The British have conquered our country and have also taken charge of our social development. The Muslims are living with us as our 'neighbours' for centuries—our job is to build points of unity with them and remove the points of differences, because the ruling power will naturally try to play up our differences and erect permanent barrier of communal division...Wake up my countrymen, the bandits are here, greedily trying to gobble all our wealth. Only our united efforts can save the entire family—division would mean disaster."<sup>3</sup> (Translated from the Bengali original—G.C.)

Presiding over the Pabna session of the Provincial Political Conference in 1907, Tagore movingly declared: "Centuries have passed—Hindus and Muslims have sat side by side on the lap of Mother India and obtained her affections—yet there are obstacles to their unity. So long as this weakness exists in our society like a festering sore, our country will not be able to achieve anything truly great. The alien rulers are trying to excite Hindu-Muslim differences—I am not afraid of that. But we must overcome our own divisive tendencies, our own weaknesses."<sup>4</sup> (Translated from the Bengali original—G.C.)

Addressing the Hindu elite, Tagore sharply declared: "We have read in the English schools longer and in far greater numbers than our Muslim brethren. As a result, there is no doubt that we have got a far greater share in governmental jobs than the Muslims. This has led to certain differences, jealousies and even bitterness. This anomaly has to be removed and we the educated Hindus must accept gladly the provision that for the present, a greater share of official jobs should go to our Muslim brothers, till such time as the present unequal status is removed...We have been born in one country, it is an act against God to disrupt the unity of our common motherland and through division and disruption, none of us can advance even our own sectional interests. Only when we realize this, then the two brothers shall unite...let us two brothers, Hindus and Mussalmans, act with tolerance, spirit of sacrifice and careful fellow-feeling to create conditions of stable political unity in India and thus liquidate the black gulf that today lies between us—for that black gulf is the creation of the British."<sup>5</sup>

As the danger of Bengal partition on communal lines became a grim living reality, the dominant section of the Hindu Nationalist leadership started becoming



angry as much against the British, as against the Muslims also. This naturally made the communal situation far worse, tended to drive a deeper wedge between Hindus and Muslims and only brought grist to the mill of the British imperialists. Tagore was among the few who kept their head and brought the National Movement face to face with certain unpleasant truths. Tagore enquired: "Reports have reached me that some of our nationalist leaders, addressing the Muslim peasantry in Mymensingh in East Bengal, against partition, did not get any good response and this made them angry with the Muslims. Did they ever pause to ask themselves: Have we even once given any tangible evidence to them or to our masses at large, that we have done anything to improve the conditions of the Muslim peasants or our rural masses? Hence we can hardly blame the Muslim peasantry of East Bengal, if they doubt our bonafides today."<sup>6</sup>

### III

TAGORE was naturally happy when Hindus and Muslims united under a common banner during the great Non-co-operation and Khilafat Movements of 1921-22. But, in his heart of hearts, he had doubts whether this unity was deep-rooted, or whether it was a mere marriage of convenience! When that unity was disrupted and a violent wave of communal riots engulfed the whole country in 1925-26, Tagore wrote in great anguish: "Our unity was not a real one....The division between Hindus and Mussalmans is not merely on religious grounds, it is based also on deep-rooted social inequality. If we want real welfare of India, then Hindus and Mussalmans must not only unite, they must also attain a certain measure of equal status. Our whole attitude is wrong upto now—we say: Let us win Swaraj first, all evils shall then disappear. That cannot be, we must fight against the communal disease, along with our fight for swaraj..."<sup>7</sup> (Translated from the Bengali original—G.C.)

At this time Tagore wrote an incisive poem called "The Religious Illusion" in which he pointed out that a country, where religion was the dominant factor in public life, was bound to crash down the path of disaster. It was better to be an atheist, he declared, than to be a religious bigot. So at the end, he appealed to God, that he should destroy religious bigotry and usher in an age of Reason in India. This was Tagore's clear-cut testament in support of the secular ideal.

In a famous letter, written during the same period, to the scholar Dr. Kalidas Nag, the poet wrote: "The Hindus of India have used their daily social customs as an insurmountable barrier against people of all other religions. This is at the root of our conflict with the Muslims....This perverse outlook shall have to be totally liquidated by sustained, painstaking endeavour and education. We must make our people understand that the wings of a bird are far more useful than the cage—only then can we hope to progress. Hindu-Muslim unity will come only when our entire social outlook undergoes an epoch-making change..."<sup>8</sup> (Translated from the Bengali original—G.C.)

A few years later, at the height of the Civil Disobedience movement, when Swaraj seemed near at hand, Tagore uttered a prophetic warning:

"Let us take it for granted that Swaraj is round the corner. But surely, there shall be a long gap between the promise of Swaraj and the actual transfer of power. The Civil Servants shall rule during this transitory period. They shall be then like injured, cornered tigers and they are likely then to do their worst to in all the divisive forces in our country, so that in exasperation people will wail: Oh, even British rule was better than this! That will be the time of our greatest order. Let us be ready from now on, so that our face is blackened then by episodes of stupid barbarity" (Translated from the Bengali original—G.C.)

In 1939, at the fag end of his life, Tagore, in a nant letter to the poet Amiya Chakravarti, "Rulers will inevitably change. But Hindus Muslims shall always live side by side—they belong to one India. If the unjust rulers of today, drive in their hearts, a dagger of division, then much will flow and the sore shall not easily heal."<sup>10</sup>

Finally, in his last clarion-call to the nation and world, Tagore denounced Imperialism as the responsible for perpetuating communal division in and expressed the profound hope, that one day forces of reason and humanity shall triumph over sinister machinations of an alien imperialist power. great pain and anger, Tagore declared: "The tragedy of India is her terrible fratricidal strife. terrible tragedy has assumed monstrous dimensions today, thanks only to the secret machinations of alien bureaucracy who rule over India..."<sup>11</sup>

Thus for over four decades, Tagore intervened very critical junctures of our national life and waged crusade against the monster of communalism, up through his powerful pen, the ideals of Reason, larism, and religious tolerance, warning again against the impending catastrophe. That was not heeded and the result was the communal caust of 1946-47 and the tragic partition of India have yet to learn the full lessons from the writings of Tagore, but perhaps, it is in the fitness of things the recent defeat of communalism in what was Eastern Pakistan, and the emergence of the secular Bangladesh has been achieved literally the banner of the writings of Tagore.

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DILEMMA  
AKALI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT



# DILEMMA OF AKALI POLITICS

“true and yet the party could never consolidate its position. Why?”

The party was founded originally to liberate the Sikh shrines from the hold of the hereditary priests who were backed by the British. The Government yielded. A law was enacted to transfer the control of Gurudwaras to a body elected by the vote of every adult Sikh in Punjab. This happened in the twenties. The Akalis had won largely because the nation identified itself with their cause. The struggle for the Gurudwaras acquired the character of a struggle against imperialism. Even Jawaharlal Nehru was drawn into the agitation and spent a few days in a jail of the princely State of Nabha. The Akalis controlled Punjab politics during the thirties and forties largely because they were very much with the Congress. The Akali Party was probably the only non-Congress Party whose members could remain members of the Congress.

## II

DURING the Second World War the Akali leaders played a dubious rôle. Some of them came out of the party and went to jail. Others cooperated with the British. But soon after the war the Akalis joined hands with the Congress and jointly contested the 1945 elections. Once again the Akalis were much in power. In 1947 the Akalis cast their weight on the side of nationalist forces and opposed the Muslim League despite their British friends advising them to the contrary. This trend continued right up to 1950. During this period the Akali leaders agreed to the scrapping of separate electorate. But a little before the 1951 elections the Akalis made the mistake of coming out of the Congress and contesting general elections. They were trounced.

The defeat in 1952 led to a lot of rethinking amongst the Akalis. They were frustrated by being ousted from the political power. They launched a series of *morchas*. Only in one *marcha* did they succeed. This was on the demand for the inclusion of Sikh Harijan castes amongst the list of Scheduled Castes. They also succeeded in another *marcha* when they won the right to shout slogan in support of the Punjabi Suba. But before winning this they had to define it to mean that the Suba will be very much a part of India. Anyway this was not much of a political victory. It happened in 1953-54. The real gain of this *marcha* was that the Akalis began to think seriously how they could secure a state where the Sikhs would have a substantive say. It was after much heart-searching that they realised that they must align themselves with the All-India demand of linguistic states. The lead in this direction was given by leftist Akali Jathedar Sampuran Singh Raman and the moderate Akali lawyer politician S. Hukam Singh.

The Akalis also realised that the prerequisite for demanding a Punjabi speaking State was the dissolution of Patiala and East Punjab States Union popularly called PEPSU. This bilingual Union was a conglomeration of princely States. It spread over areas which now are in Punjab and Haryana. In demanding the dissolution of PEPSU the Akalis were taking a bold stand. PEPSU was a small State and most of

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

## I

The Akalis are in difficulty. Fifty years after the Party was founded, it finds itself without a leader and a programme. The Party has been losing its vantage for the last few years and its downhill tendency only indicates its inability to adjust itself to changing situation. The Akali leaders thought of celebrating their golden jubilee a couple of years ago. Nothing happened. The move ended in a whimper because the leadership has felt dispirited. In its leaders aimed high. Those dreams came

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The Sikhs were living outside it. Yet there was one consolation that PEPSU had a Sikh majority. In fact Sardar Patel had once referred to it as home land for the Sikhs. The Akalis felt that they must give up this notion of a home land to have a real home land for the Sikhs. But once again they had to accept the fact that this home land could come about only if the character of the demand was secular. No body would create home lands for every religious group in this country. But there can be home lands for languages. Thus arose the demand for a Punjabi Suba where Punjabi shall be the principal language. The 1965 Boundary Commission rejected the demand but a little later the Akalis were able to get accepted the principle that there were two linguistic divisions of the composite Punjab after PEPSU was merged into Punjab. District-wise Punjabi and Hindi regions were demarcated.

The experiment of regional committees did not succeed and the Akalis were again on the rampage. There were *morchas* and fasts. These agitations were largely confined to the Sikh followers of the Akali Dal whose membership was restricted to Sikhs only. The Akalis did not win anything till 1965. Nine long years were wasted in agitations. Nothing came out even though almost a lakh of people went to jail. The Akali agitation suffered from one major weakness. The Hindus in Punjab did not support them. Nor were the Hindus in Haryana enthused about the Punjabi Suba. The Akalis had to wait. It was only Sant Fateh Singh who saw the impossibility of the situation. He was wise enough to own secularism. He used to proclaim that his main contribution was that he made the Punjabi Suba demand acceptable by transforming it into a linguistic demand. Master Tara Singh did not comprehend the changing political situations and was driven out of politics by Sant Fateh Singh who was more acceptable to the national ethos.

### III

THE Punjabi Suba did come about. But it came about after a series of developments in 1965. Pakistan attacked in 1965 September. The Sikhs stood by the country. The jawans fought but equally important was the tremendous response given by the Sikh peasantry on the borders to the war effort. The whole country talked of the phenomenal support given by the civilians. Most of them on the frontiers were Sikhs. This destroyed the arguments given by the opponents of Punjabi Suba that the Akali demand was separatist. Once this was demolished there was no problem in creating a Punjabi Suba. The communal Hindus in Punjab disowned Punjabi but nobody took their denial seriously. By now Haryana had woken up. There was a consolidated demand for carving out a Hindi speaking State and the Haryana leaders also supported the demand for the Punjabi Suba. By March 1966 the Parliament had politically conceded the demand for a Punjabi Suba, a Haryana and an enlarged Himachal Pradesh.

In 1966 the Akalis went to the polls and met their first defeat. Here was a Sikh majority State. Two-third of its seats had Sikh majority because most of the Hindus are concentrated in urban constituencies. The

Akalis said they were a party of the Sikhs, for the Sikhs, by the Sikhs. They had won for the Sikh state with a clear cut Sikh majority. The Congress was in bad shape. It had lost its old strength. It was a septuagenarian Chief Minister who had no pull with the people. And yet the Akalis, could not get a majority. They were shocked. The Akalis managed to form a government which, however, collapsed within a year. It fell because of a massive revolt by Mr. Lachhman Singh Gill who could not understand the Akalis hob-nobbing with Jana Sangh. He argued that a minority community must not strengthen majority communalism. But no body listened to him. He revolted and the Akali government collapsed. Gill became the Chief Minister with the Congress support.

The Akalis were once again in a bad shape. Punjab remained unstable and in 1969 it went to the polls again. This time the Akalis made elaborate arrangements and entered into electoral alliances, understandings and adjustments with the Jana Sangh, Communists, SSP and the Republicans. And yet they did not get a majority of their own. Once again the Sikh masses refused to unite or vote communally. Congress despite its utter weaknesses survived with 110 seats in a house of 110. The Akalis again formed a government with the help of Jana Sangh and support of communists. But it did not work long. Soon the Akalis and Jana Sangh were at each others' throats. They had won elections on anti-Hindi and anti-Slogans respectively. How could they remain united? The whole thing looked funny. The Jana Sangh soothed the advice of Guru Golwarkar who asked them to stick on to power at any cost. They were told the Suba was to create conditions to win power at the Centre and then it would strengthen every party. Nothing of the kind happened. The Jana Sangh in Punjab began to feel terribly uncomfortable. There was a limit to humiliation it could suffer. Under heavy pressure the Jana Sangh walked out of the Government in 1970.

For a brief period the Akalis ran the government by themselves with an all Sikh Cabinet surviving on support of the communists. Within the all Sikh Cabinet the Akali Party could not consolidate power or popularity; in 1970 the party split because the Minister Mr. Gurnam Singh had enough of dictatorship of the organisational set up with Jathedars. Chief Minister had to act within the framework of a constitution and for the whole society. But this was not enough for a group of people who had gathered votes for the party on the slogan of creating a State where the will of one community shall pervade all governmental actions.

Mr. Gurnam Singh revolted and the leadership of Sant Fateh Singh formed a government with landlord Parkash Singh Badam as Minister. This Government could fare no better. It was riven with internal dissensions. A party can come to power with promises but it cannot retain power with promises alone. It must do something. What the Akalis could do? They had no political or economic programmes and no body was impressed by their attention to temple renovation. Class conflicts and caste tensions



take the government into pieces. This break-up was hastened by the defeat of the Akalis in the Lok Sabha elections of 1971. For a long time Mr. Gurnam Singh negotiated with the Congress for a settlement of Parliament seats. Punjab had nine seats. The Congress had held seven since 1966. At one stage the Congress was willing to give four seats to the Akalis and be content with five. But the Akalis were riding the high horse. They thought that they could win almost all the nine seats, since there was a Sikh majority in Akali government and the divided Congress to justify their hopes; nothing of the kind happened when the talks broke and the Akalis and the Congress fought against each other. The Akalis got only one seat out of nine, unlike the DMK in Madras. Only a year earlier the Akalis had sailed along with the national sentiment and supported Mr. V.V. Giri against Mr. Sanjeeva Reddy. This time they earned and lost. Their Government collapsed. The Punjab again went to polls in 1972 and Congress returned with a comfortable majority in the 104 man legislature. The Akalis did not even get one-third of the seats. That broke their back.

Within a few months of their total defeat Sant Fateh Singh retired and a little later died. His associate Sant Channan Singh followed.

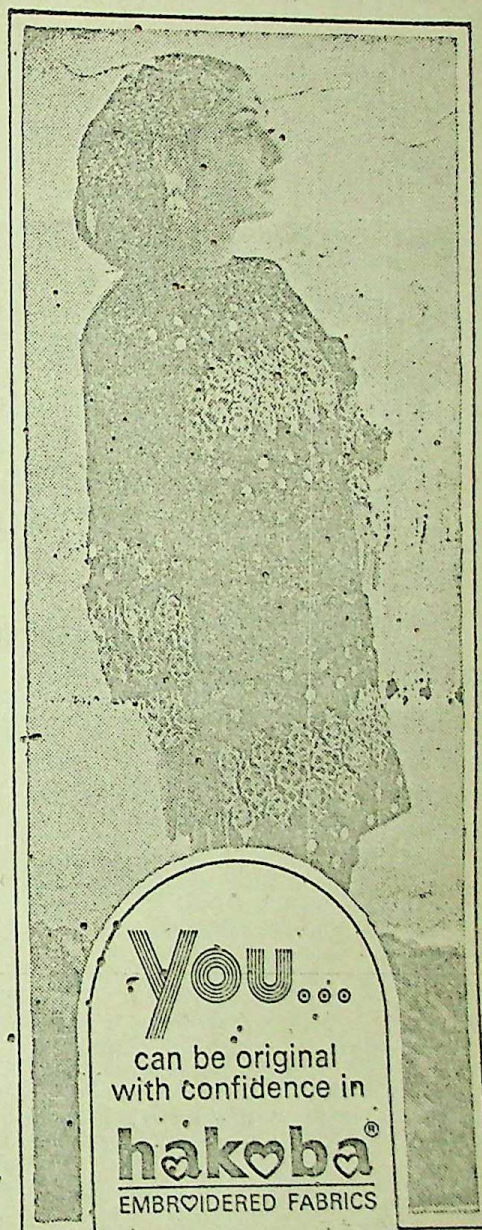
The fifty year history of the Akalis shows one thing. The Akalis gained whenever they sailed with the national sentiments. They suffered when they ran counter to it.

#### IV

TO-DAY the Akali party is faced with a cruel dilemma.

It is a party which is open only to Sikhs. Not all Sikhs care to join it. Those who joined did not care to stay in it. Once Master Tara Singh told me that most of the Sikh politicians of Punjab started as Akalis, but did not stay there long. I asked him why? He refused to understand the causes and confined himself to denunciations. The Congress and Communist Akalis have many legitimate explanations which the Akalis accept in private talks. Firstly the Akali Party has a very limited field of operations. Its main source of strength remained temple funds, or large scale donations from rich landlords and businessmen. This stifles all independent thinking. Occasionally some enthusiastic youngmen succeed in getting leftist postures adopted by the Akali Dal. But all its socialist protestations collapse. The time for action comes. Akalis are one of those mass parties which publicly opposed ceiling on land holdings or nationalisation of road transport. The Akali party refuses to understand that in a joint electorate a single community party can never obtain power even though that community is in majority. This is as true of the Akalis as it is true of the Jana Sangh in U.P., Haryana or elsewhere.

The Akalis have also failed to understand that in a democracy a party should not only ensure democracy abroad but also democratic functioning within. And democratic functioning is possible only when parties take political and economic stances on specific issues. It is not possible that parties revolve round personalities and win votes under the threat of a real or imaginary danger to religion or community.



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# CHOICES FOR URDU READERSHIP

ANWAR MOAZZAM

## I

Urdu readership in India is a choiceless community. Urdu reader has no choice except reading the literature provided by the faith-oriented writers. Theologians, in the absence of social-scientists in the field, have taken upon themselves the task of explaining and discussing the sociological, economic and political situation. They have failed in this venture. The chief cause of their failure lies in their refusal to admit that religion is not knowledge but a part of it and, secondly, in their historical interpretation of Islam is not enough to solve existing problems. They continue to ignore Sir Syed's suggestion for developing a modern *Ulm-e-Islam* (scholasticism) to deal with the problems created by modern knowledge. The traditional *Ulama* might be experts in Islamic sciences but they are absolutely unaware of the nature of the situation on which they want to apply their knowledge.

A survey of published Urdu material during the post-Independence era will reveal that the faith-oriented literature enjoys a wider circulation. Urdu is the medium of literary expression of the majority of Indian Muslims residing mostly in North India. Except Hyderabad all important Urdu centres are in this region, like Delhi, Lucknow, Aligarh, Allahabad, Rampur, Deoband, Azamgarh, Patna, Banaras and Bhopal. Secondly, in North India, most of the publishing-houses are in U.P. to which a majority of Muslim writers also belong. It is, therefore, not surprising that 90 per cent of the specific political issues discussed in Urdu books and journals are related to this State. Due to the location of publishing-houses and the higher educational and religious institutions in U.P. Urdu literature is mostly dominated by the thinking of the Muslim elite of this region. Either the North Indian journals and publishers have failed to attract the attention of writers of other regions or there are no writers there who are interested in expressing themselves in Urdu on Islam or the contemporary Muslim situation in India. It is significant that so far as printed material in Urdu is concerned Aligarh and Deoband are conspicuous by their failure in making any significant contribution during the post-Independence era.

## II

JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI is the most active on the literary front by providing religious guidance with regard to contemporary issues through books, pamphlets, the *Daily Dawat* and the *Monthly Zindagi*. Abul Ala Maududi continues to be the source of such guidance. Besides publishing Maududi's selected writings, the

Jamaat has brought out a number of books on various subjects including Quranic studies, Islamic legal position regarding Muslim Personal Law, Islamic teachings, history and culture, political concepts, prohibition of bank interest, secularism, communism, democracy and the communal problem. However, the Jamaat literature betrays a lack of awareness of the implications of ignoring the demands of modern knowledge and theories of socio-political interaction. They are content with reiterating the validity of Islamic classical concepts without establishing their convincing and dynamic relationship with the existing values which, for the sake of convenience, they totally reject.

Jamaat-e-Islami rejects secularism as a way of life. It calls upon Muslims in particular and the non-Muslims in general to establish a life-system based not on secularism (interpreted as *la diniyat*, that is, irreligiousness) but on the concepts of servitude and obedience to God and the *Khilafat* of the peoples.<sup>1</sup> The Jamaat refused to participate in the Muslim Convention of 1961 held at Lucknow, objecting to the condition laid down by the organizers that only those parties which believed in secularism were eligible to attend it. It stated that by making secularism as the collective principle, the Convention intended to lead the Muslims towards irreligiousness instead of *din*.<sup>2</sup> However, while the Jamaat rejected secularism as a concept standing for atheistic ideologies, it expressed its readiness to accept it as a policy aiming at equal treatment of religious communities in official business and socio-economic affairs.<sup>3</sup> This is apparently a concession allowed in view of the benefits which may accrue from such secular policy in favour of the Indian Muslims. In fact, non-believers as they are in any other source except their own version of Islam, the Jamaat writers look with suspicion at any interpretation of secularism except that based on Islam which ultimately emerges as a policy of toleration of non-Muslim communities in a state ruled by the Muslims. Secularism, according to one writer, is a deceptive concept as it has been equally owned by the communist dictatorship of the proletariat, the corporate state of Mussolini and the socialist State of Hitler. The only authentic version of secularism and democracy, it is asserted, is that available in Islam.<sup>4</sup> This is yet another instance of the similar futile psychological exercises indulged in by the Jamaat ideologues of reminding the Muslims that Islam is an all-embracing life-system. It is futile since, firstly, it is too familiar to need any repetition and, secondly, it is not going to help the Muslims in their wholehearted participation in the national task of secularisation of Indian society which, besides other implications, also ensures a more secure and strong status to the Indian minorities themselves.

A similar refuge in Islamic theology and an unwillingness to make room for contemporary socio-political trends and concepts are discernible in another group of scholars and writers at Lucknow headed by the renowned scholar, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi. Their writings show a more sober, less sentimental and an academic approach to the past and present of Islam and Indian Muslims. The weekly *Nida-e-Millat* and the monthly, *Al-Furqan* represent this trend forcefully.

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Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi is an active supporter of the Tablighi Jamaat and holds that only re-Islamization of Indian Muslims can help them solve their problems. *Jamaat-e-Millat*, holding views similar to the Jamaat, writes on Islam and secularism, recognises the crucial importance of secularism to India and concedes that only secularism can guarantee the geographical and political unity and progress of India.<sup>5</sup> *Al-Furqan* suggests that the Hindu-Muslim tension has nothing to do with religion as such. The unsocial and fanatic elements and the helplessness of the government are mainly responsible for the communal riots.<sup>6</sup> The intellectuals, teachers, students and the press have to play a major role in meeting the challenge of the communal forces.<sup>7</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi sounds hopeful when he regards the communal problem "as a passing phenomenon in the evolution of our national life."<sup>8</sup> Besides *Jamaat-e-Islami* and the Lucknow group, there is a third point of view in the faith-oriented Urdu literature rather feebly represented by the Darul Uloom Deoband and *Jamiaatul Ulama-e-Hind*. Their weakness lies in the fact that while Deoband has confined itself to religious instruction and is content with relaxing over its past glory, the *Jamia-ul-Ulama* has relapsed into academic inactivity after respectable contribution by scholars like Maulana Hifzur Rahman and Syed Muhammad Miyan.

How about the modernist trend? Modernist thinking, giving priority to contemporary interpretation of religious beliefs and concepts and to modern values of science and culture, does not exist as a trend in Urdu literature. In fact, the Indian Muslims have yet to produce a cadre of really modernist thinkers. The few who exist prefer to write in English apparently in order to receive better appreciation among the non-Muslim enlightened circles whereas the conservative ones simply ignore them.

### III

Besides the trends sketched above there are individual scholars and intellectuals who are active in the fields of religious history of Islam in India (Prof. K.A. Nizami), religion (Saeed Ahmad Akbarabadi) and culture (Dr. Abid Husain, Prof. M. Mujeeb). Dr. Abid Husain, a prominent Urdu writer and author of the book on Indian Muslims written in Urdu from a pan-nationalistic-modernistic point of view, has tied the Muslim socio-political behaviour with reference to the Indian situation in recent history. He suggests that the Indian Muslims have to choose one of two alternatives—either "to live as an integral part of a secular nation" while maintaining their distinct religious and cultural entity<sup>9</sup> or "to live as a minority which does not really accept the prevailing political and social order but is forced to submit to it."<sup>10</sup> He is convinced that they have to choose the alternative of living in the national state under secular democratic constitution of India.<sup>11</sup>

Among the journals, *Fikr-o-Nazar*, an Aligarh Muslim University quarterly, *Jamia*, a monthly published by *Jamia Millia Islamia*, Delhi and the quarterly *Islam aur Asr-i-Jadid* (Islam and Modern Age, same issue in English) edited by Dr. Abid Husain, have become the organs of modern thinking which at present they are not. *Burhan* and *Ma'arif*, two Delhi

monthlies have been maintaining high standards of research mostly in the medieval Muslim period with less attention to the contemporary issues. *Tajalli* (Deoband) and *al-Hasanat* (Rampur) are the other leading monthlies representing conservative thinking.

Now, as already pointed out in the introductory remarks, the faith-oriented literature enjoys a wider circulation for two reasons: firstly, amidst the Urdu community the conservative sections are the most vocal, articulate and devoted and secondly, their medium of expression is Urdu. It may appear to be the most obvious reason but unfortunately the significance of these very obvious reasons have not yet been noted by the commentators on and the critics of Muslim behaviour in India. Those who appeared exasperated at the un-encouraging response among the Muslims towards democracy, secularism and modernisation have failed to observe that there exists no line of communication linking them with the sources of these concepts. So far as the literate Muslim is concerned, his mind is fed with ideas and information cooked by his religious elite and served efficiently and in real earnest in the language he knows. This is especially true with regard to the Urdu-speaking Muslim.

All major intellectual, political and religious movements among the Indian Muslims in modern history were carried on in Urdu. Sir Syed's success as a modernist was to a great extent due to making Urdu as the medium of his expression. His major contribution was, in my opinion, that he provided the Urdu readers an opportunity to choose between his own rational point of view and the traditional and dogmatic approach prevalent during his time. That Sir Syed's utilization of Urdu paid dividends is proved by the fact that an anti-classical and realistic approach was introduced besides the well-entrenched traditional religious trend and, thanks to the follow-up through the Aligarh Movement, the Urdu speaking Muslims were able to distinguish between the secular and non-secular aspects of social life.

Today there is no such choice available for the Urdu readers due to absence of any realistic trend and a preponderance of the ill-informed theological literature loaded with glorification of past history. Whatever influence organisations like *Jamaat-e-Islami* enjoy among the Muslim elite is not necessarily because the writers are of a high intellectual calibre but because like their predecessors they approach their readers in their own language. The prestige and popularity of Abul Ala Maududi rest not so much on any original contribution to Islamic thought by him as on his voluminous writings on almost every topic related to religion and society in chaste Urdu with great clarity and simplicity and in a forceful style.

The realistic and modern Muslim is forced to play a dual role: he has not only to speak as a Muslim to his non-Muslim counter-part but he has also to bear the brunt of the wrath of the traditional elite of his own community who equate his realism or modernism with heresy or unbelief and his faith in secularism and socialism with appeasement of the majority community. This has led to the feeling that they avoid writing in Urdu for fear of being ignored and condemned by the Muslim orthodoxy.



The vulnerability of Urdu readership to conservative leadership made possible due to the absence of any forceful modernistic trend has been further strengthened by want of literature on philosophy and social sciences. This explains the backward-looking character of their thinking even in the realm of religion which they continue to study in the medieval context and terms. It also explains why they have failed to understand the functioning of modern institutions like democracy, socialism and democracy which could reveal any meaning only through the appreciation of those contemporary forces which have produced these institutions.

#### IV

In the foregoing analysis no reference has been made to Urdu creative literature which, it has to be noted, has maintained its unique secular character independent of religious and political dictations from without. Probably, Urdu is the only Indian language which has produced a literature truly Indian in spirit and character. However, it is not always the poets and short-story writers who shape and guide people's behaviour; this is done more through literature on social, cultural and political issues and concepts. Hence the emphasis on availability of such literature in Urdu.

For some, Urdu may be the major obstacle in the way of Muslims' joining the still-to-be defined 'mainstream' of Indian life. For me, it is the only medium through which the social and intellectual life of the majority of the Indian Muslims can be most effectively and speedily secularised.

I have a feeling that the situation in the other language groups of India may be similar to that of Urdu people as described above. It is my considered opinion that the discussion on vital issues like secularism, socialism and democracy which is now going on in our country in English, will lead us nowhere. It would have to be shifted to the languages the Indian people know. If we are really sincere in our intentions and serious in our efforts to build-up a strong secular democracy, then the guiding concepts and ideas should reach down through these languages to the level of mass understanding. Hence, the Urdu-speaking people deserve to be first educated in these ideas before being taken to task for their not responding to them in a positive way.

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## URDU AND SECULARISM

KHALIQ ANJUM

URDU is a developed form of Khari Boli which was a dialect spoken in and around the districts Meerut and Delhi and north-west of Uttar Pradesh. Muslim conquerors had come and settled down in the region. They had brought with them the Turkish, Persian and Arabic literary traditions. Settlement in India snapped their links with their original home. In the process of identification with Indian population their original languages were replaced by the Khari Boli which later took the form of Urdu and Hindi according to the preponderance of Persio-Arabic or Sanskrit diction.

Literary tradition in Khari Boli developed not before the first decade of the 18th century in and around the Dargah. Hindu and Muslim intellectuals like Khan Arzoo, Mirza Mazhar, Tek Chand Bahar and Anand Ram Mukhlis who adopted Khari Boli for their literary expression, were soaked in Persian literature. Persian vocabulary, diction, literary forms and rules of verification naturally passed into the new literary productions in Khari Boli.

They adopted Persio-Arabic script for the new language, perhaps because that was the one script they knew. The thought content of this literature was deeply influenced by the intellectual atmosphere of the Sufi saints, both Hindu and Muslim. Tasavvuf, as the thought-system of Sufis is known, was the most popular system during 18th century. Much can be said about the philosophy of tasavvuf, its over-emphasis on otherworldliness, its concept of the transitory nature of the world and its philosophy of contentment. The most relevant aspect of it, at least so far as we are concerned, was the belief that all the regions of the world were divine in origin. Tasavvuf tried to bring the men of different religions and beliefs close to each other. Thus an atmosphere of religious and social tolerance grew. Tasavvuf made it possible for Muslim Sufis to have Hindu disciples and for non-Muslim saints to have Muslim ones.

Among the early poets of Urdu there was a fairly large number of Sufis. Urdu poetry served as the medium for propagation of their philosophy. They made conscious efforts to banish intolerance and hatred, which was created by the theologians of different religions for furthering their self interest.



Mirza Mazhar Janjanaan, one of the early poets, a very famous Naqshbandi sufi and pioneer of a very important movement in Urdu literature. Among his disciples were both Hindus and Muslims. His attitude is typified by the fact that when the Mughal King sent him an offering in the form of money, he refused to accept it while he was pleased to accept from his Hindu disciple, Kewal Ram, a house to live in. He was the great champion of the concept that all religions are based on universal truth. In a letter to one of his disciples he wrote: "Since the Qoran says that there are prophets of whom we have told you nothing besides those of whom we have told you a lot. And since the Qoran is silent on so many prophets, we should prefer silence in regard to the prophets of India. We should neither call their followers *kafirs*, nor place them in the Hell on our own...As their (Hindus') image-worship, the fact is not as it appears. According to them certain angels have got the authority to intervene in the affairs of the world, with the prior concurrence of the Almighty; also the souls of certain perfect ones, after they have departed from their bodies, have a say in human affairs. Some of the persons are endowed with eternal life, just like Khizr. Now, these people, making their images use them as objects for concentration...As I see it this act is just like our zikr; which is so popular among the Sufis of Islam who conceive the person of their Sheikh and get whatever they get from him."

Other early Urdu Sufi poets like Shah Mubarak Abru, Sharfuddin Mazmoon and Sheikh Hatim also held almost the same views about religion. Urdu poetry of these Sufis became a very important vehicle to carry the philosophy of *tasavvuf* to the literate and non-literate people on the one hand, and on the other it gave a secular character to Urdu literature.

Within a hundred years, i.e. during 19th century, Urdu produced more than one thousand poets and writers all of whom wrote in Persio-Arabic script. Not a single work of either a Hindu or a Muslim poet was written in any other script.

In 1800 Fort William College was established by the British at Calcutta as a memorial to the defeat of Tipu Sultan. The aim of this College was to impart instructions to junior Civil Servants of the East India Company, so that they might learn Hindustani, and could have a better understanding of Indian laws, religions, manners and literature etc.

Dr. John Gilchrist, a professor of the College, appointed many translators to translate Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit books into Urdu and Bengali. He got some books translated in Hindi also. The language of these books was not present day's Hindi. It was either Urdu or Brij Bhasha, or Awadhi dialect written in Devanagari.

After 1857, when the political and social conditions and the policies of Britishers resulted in an alienation of Hindu and Muslim communities to some extent, the language issue also figured on the political scene of the country. By this time English and Urdu had completely occupied the place of Persian as a language of courts and administration. The Hindu revivalists took up cudgels on behalf of Hindi which had come

into vogue as a result of encouragement at Fort William. They started the demand that Hindi and not Urdu should be the language of courts and administration. Their counterparts among Muslims reacted to this demand, and within a short period language became a bone of political contention.

One of the results of this controversy was, that Urdu was identified with Muslims. It was totally ignored that Urdu had never been exclusively the language of Muslims. Right from the beginning people from all religions contributed to the growth and development of Urdu language and literature. Despite this controversy Urdu has Rattan Nath Sarshar, Brij Narain Chakbast, Tilok Chand Mehroon, Prem Chand and others. The names of Krishan Chander, Rajindra Singh Bedi, Raghupati Sahai Firaq Gorakhpuri and Jagan Nath Azad top the list of the writers and poets of modern Urdu writers, which is a sufficient proof if any required, that Urdu is not the language of Muslims alone. Equally true is the fact that Urdu is not the mother tongue of all the Muslims of India. According to 1971 census, the percentage of Muslim population in India is 11.21 per cent while Urdu speakers form only 5.22 per cent of the total population of the country.

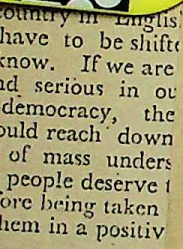
Urdu literature has maintained its secular character throughout its history. The formation of the Muslim League, the two nations theory, and slogans like 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan' and 'Urdu-Muslim-Pakistan' did not produce even a ripple on the surface of the sea of Urdu literature. In fact communal politics was vehemently opposed by Urdu writers. Scholar of stature like Shibhi wrote so many poems against Muslim League; poets like Hali, Shibhi, Tilok Chand Mehrom, Shasrat Mohani and Zafar Ali Khan wrote innumerable poems on the need of Hindu-Muslim unity and on national integration. Hundreds of Urdu poets participated in the freedom struggle through their writings. It would be no exaggeration to say that Urdu literature throbbled in time with the most advanced sections of politics. Several of them suffered privations for their ideas. It was only because of the secular character of Urdu, that not a single mentionable poet favoured either Muslim League or the idea of Pakistan.

Mohd. Hasan Askari, a great champion of the two nation theory, now a Pakistani national, writes in his Urdu book '*Insan Aur Admi*':

"Now (Urdu) writers had no interest with the political problems of Muslims. There were many poets and writers who were against the policy of Muslim League, while many others remained quite indifferent. This way the Urdu writers were either against the idea of Pakistan or were in a fix. Their feeling was, how does it matter if Pakistan comes in existence or does not? They, in fact, did not like the policies based on religion. Writers who did not have any interest in socialist ideology, were also of the opinion that economic solutions of the political problems should be preferred to any other kind of solution. Our people had developed the habit of seeing the things through the eyes of Europe. Things not acceptable to Europe were not acceptable to our writers also. Therefore, demand of some political rights on the basis of religion, was rejected by our writers."



the foregoing analysis of Urdu creative literature maintained its unique religious and political identity, Urdu is the only language which has produced a literature truly representative of the Muslim community. However, it is not only the Urdu writers who shape the literary scene; it is done more through the Urdu press on political issues and the availability of such literature. For some, Urdu may be the only language of Muslims' joining the mainstream of Indian life. It is through which the social and political identity of the Indian Muslim is maintained.



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# Secular Basis of Muslim Separatism

Dr K. P. KARUNAKARAN

The roots of political confusion in Pakistan lie in the history of the Indian sub-continent. As far as the sections of the Muslims of the sub-continent were concerned, it can be safely asserted that religion did play a major role in the evolution of their political culture. When one moves on from the general statement to examination of the nature and scope of the role of religion, no definite position can be clearly maintained. Occasionally, a major section of the Muslims supported Indian nationalists against the alien ruler and on other occasions they or another large section were in the company of the British Government and against the nationalist movement. Like any militant political movement, there was an element of authoritarianism in political agitation led by the Muslim League in India before 1947. Its main thrust was towards democracy and its demands were connected with raising the social and economic levels of the Muslims who were the deprived sections of Indian society.

## COMMUNALISM—WITHOUT RELIGIOSITY

To take first the role of religion in the political thinking of Indian Muslims before 1947, Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) was the first leader of the modern India who made tremendous impact on the thinking of Muslims. He also played a major part in organising Aligarh College which later became the Aligarh Muslim University. He wrote and spoke extensively on social, religious and political matters. The separatist movement of the Muslims of India, which finally culminated in the establishment of Pakistan, owed its origin to the movements he started.

Syed Ahmed Khan's activities and writings made clear that he was strongly in favour of Indian Muslims accepting Western culture and reorganising the religious life in accordance with it. He based his arguments in favour of social and religious reforms on religious texts. He tried to maintain that there was a similarity between Islam and Christianity. He even published a commentary on the Bible. He tried to distinguish what is essential and what is accretion in different religions; he arrived at his own concept of 'Religion'. He himself was genuinely tolerant, deeming that a man's religion was a private affair which should not even be discussed between those of different faiths, lest friendship be weakened. Even the slightest sign of religious bigotry

distressed him.<sup>1</sup> This was in regard to the relation between the followers of one faith and those of another. *There are not many non-Muslims in Pakistan today. But the basic approach of the present champions of the Islamic State of Pakistan goes against the spirit of Syed Ahmed Khan's teachings.*

In another field also, this contradiction between Syed Ahmed's views and those of the present Pakistani rulers is obvious. While expressing his opposition to miracles and supernatural authority, Syed Ahmed Khan said: '.....it has become a habit with men, that they ascribe miracles and super-natural attributes to an object or a person whom they consider to be holy or sacred. That is why men have inter-polated super-natural factors into Islam, which are not worthy of belief, but such credulous persons believe in them. However, this is a grievous mistake. Any religion which is true, or claims to be true cannot contain such elements in it as are contrary to nature and offend human reason, so that a sensible person would find it impossible to believe in them. A true faith, in its pristine purity is absolutely free from such supernatural and irrational elements'.<sup>2</sup>

Syed Ahmed did not stand for revivalism in any sense of the word. He was clearly in favour of the re-interpretation of Islam in line with the liberal and scientific culture of the West.

Syed Ahmed was also the first prominent leader to champion Muslim separatism. His reasons for this were completely secular. In his own words: 'In a country like India homogeneity does not exist in any one of these fields; the introduction of representative government cannot produce any beneficial results; it can only result in interference with the peace and prosperity of the land.' This is the line later taken by Jinnah also.

Syed Ahmed Khan also felt that the Muslims should not involve themselves in political activities before they raise their educational standards and remove their economic backwardness. In regard to these matters his approach was based on worldly matters. He rarely put forward a metaphysical argument.

As Syed Ahmed Khan noted that the Muslims kept away from the education provided by the British rulers because some of them had a feeling that they had a subordinate political status in the country which was

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once ruled by their ancestors. Hunter observed in his book *The Indian Mussalmans*: 'One hundred and seventy years ago it was almost impossible for a well-born Mussalman to become poor; at present it is almost impossible for him to become rich.' As the authors of the book, *The Cultural Heritage of Pakistan* pointed out..... 'Muslim frustration deepened, and the Muslims began to sink lower and lower in the economic, political and educational spheres. It was left to Syed Ahmed Khan to remove co-religionists out of their sullenness to prepare them for new values that would challenge their old notions.' Syed Ahmed Khan's attempt was clearly to work out a liberal Islam compatible with the nineteenth century West, similar to it in general outlook, and, especially, in harmony with its science, its business methods, and its humanitarianism. He wanted to repudiate from Islam, as later accretions or misinterpretations, all that ran counter to Western liberal ideas.

Many Muslim leaders even displayed a tendency to maintain that their community was nearer to the Western society than the Hindus were. Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928), an eminent jurist and a prolific writer, was a typical representative of this group. According to him Islam was a dynamic religion commensurate with modern ideas. In his book, *Anglo-Mohammedan Law*, Ameer Ali attempted to codify and interpret Islamic laws and institutions so as to bring them in harmony with modern legal concepts.

The objections of some Muslims to their participation in the Indian National Congress were based on the following assumptions: (1) the Muslims and the Hindus were two nations; (2) representative institutions were not suitable to India because the population was not a homogeneous one; (3) the Indian Muslims must be loyal to the British and must depend on them for safeguarding their interests; (4) they must concentrate on spreading education and on taking over steps to raise themselves socially; (5) they must not participate in the agitation for the grant of political power to the representatives of the people.

In a sense this was the beginning of Muslim communalism. One explanation was that the Muslim middle-class could be said to be substituting communalism for religion, in precisely the same sense in which nationalism in the Western capitalist world could be said to have taken the place of religion. Another definition is this: 'Nationalism and Communalism are here taken as applying only to the political tendencies of the period and to strictly similar phenomenon. Although parallel, they present some asymmetry in their meaning. Nationalism refers to the notions either as a tendency inspired by its existence or as the aspiration to build a nation. Communalism supposes the existence of a community, a group of adherents of the same religion, but it gets the edge of its meaning through parallelism with the other term; it is something like nationalism in which, so to speak, nation is replaced by the community. In other words, communalism is the affirmation of the religious community as a political group.' Religion is relevant to the concept of communalism, only because it is concerned with a religious community. It should be em-

phasized that the communal spirit of an individual is not in proportion to his adherence of the religion, but in proportion to his degree of identification of his community as a social, economic and political group and to his degree of antagonism to other groups. The following definition emphasizes this fact: 'Communalism in India is that ideology which emphasizes the social, political and economic unity of the adherents of each religion and emphasizes the antagonism—even the antagonism—between such groups.'

It is also significant that those who championed the interests of one religious community as against those of another religious community were not primarily adherents of any orthodox religious philosophy. In fact the majority of them were not, in the common sense, religious at all. This was true of some among the Hindus as well as among the Muslims. Unlike Gandhi, Radhakrishna, Vinoba Bhave and Rajagopalachari no leader of the Hindu community or the Jana Sangh wrote interpretations of the Gita, the Upanishads, Ramayana and Mahabharata. And the latter were the Hindu communalists of the former. Among the Muslims, Maulana Azad was an authority of Islam was a leader of the Indian National Congress. M.A. Jinnah, who became the symbol of Muslim communal identity, was not a follower of Islam. Like Z.A. Bhutto of independent Pakistan, Jinnah had no reputation for his loyalty to some of personal and social behaviour connected with Islam.

#### RELIGIOUS ORTHODOXY AGAINST COMMUNALISM

Among those who affirmed allegiance to Islam, the Deoband School and the Ulema tradition were well known. But as the study, *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan*, reveals, the majority among them were not supporters of the demand for Pakistan. The theological school was started in 1867. Very few trained by the school participated in the movement for the creation of Pakistan.

It is also significant that the Jamaat-e-Islami adherents were also not enthusiastic about the creation of Pakistan. Kalim Bahadur develops this length in his book *The Jamaat-e-Islami of India*. Unlike the Deoband School and the Jammat-e-Islami, Muhammad Iqbal (1876-1938) was not unequivocal support to the idea of composite Indian Nationalism. Many Pakistanis claim that Iqbal's legacy was the creation of a separate state for the Muslims of India. But Iqbal was also a very dynamic thinker who insisted that life was movement, that action was dynamic, that universe was composed of processes and not static things. Many socialists and communists claim that they were inspired by Iqbal.

#### THE DYNAMICS OF COMMUNALISM

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It is also significant that the Jamaat-e-Islami and its adherents were also not enthusiastic about the creation of Pakistan. Kalim Bahadur develops this theme at length in his book *The Jammāt-e-Islāmī of Pakistan*.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the Deoband School and the Jammāt-e-Islami, Muhammad Iqbal (1876-1938) was not unequivocal in support to the idea of composite Indian Nationalism. Many Pakistanis claim that Iqbal's legacy was in favour of the creation of a separate state for the Muslims of India. But Iqbal was also a very dynamic thinker who insisted that life was movement, that action was good, that universe was composed of processes and not of static things. Many socialists and communists claimed that they were inspired by Iqbal.

#### THE DYNAMICS OF COMMUNALISM

M.A. Jinnah (1876-1948), the most significant leader of Indian Muslims during 1934-1947 and the First Governor-General of Pakistan, was in one sense the

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striking symbol of the ideology of Pakistan. He began his public life as a Congressman devoted to the concepts of liberalism. He was once referred to by Sarojini Naidu, the Congress leader, as the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. But by 1940, Jinnah became the most articulate leader of the Muslim communalism in India. He was, however, by no means its creator.

If the origin of the Muslim communalism lay in the backwardness of the Muslims in the social, economic and political fields in relation to the Hindus, its growth and dynamics depended on many factors. The political cleavage between the two communities gradually widened. The British Government was no doubt interested in dividing the communities. The Hindu revivalism in various forms asserted itself and strengthened Muslim communalism. To begin with, what the Muslim leaders often tried to do was to stress the grievances of the Muslim community in the social, economic and administrative fields and asked for their redress.

Since the establishment of the Muslim League in 1906 to its demand for the creation of Pakistan in 1940, the Muslim leaders travelled a long way but never diverted their path to theocracy or metaphysics. A Muslim deputation which met the Viceroy on October, 1906 asked, among other things, for separate representation of Muslims in all levels of government—district boards, municipalities and legislative councils. The meeting which was convened at Dacca in December, 1906 to establish the Muslim League, declared: 'That this meeting, composed of Mussalmans from all parts of India, assembled at Dacca declares that a political association styled the All-India Muslim League be formed for the furtherance of the following objects: (a) To promote among the Mussalmans of India feelings of loyalty to the British Government and to remove any misconceptions that may rise as to the intention of Government with regard to any of its members; (b) to protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Mussalmans of India and respectively to represent their needs and aspirations to the government; (c) to prevent the rise among the Mussalmans of India of any feelings of hostility towards other communities, without prejudice to other objects of the League.'

As the British Government in India gave the political concessions to the nationalists, the Muslim League demanded an increasing share in the political and administrative spheres. They were not always satisfied with a share in proportion to their population. Often they asked for a weightage—on some occasions on the ground that they were a weak community and other occasions on the ground that the Muslims were once the rulers of the country.

The Muslim League put forward the demand for the establishment of Pakistan only in March 1940 in a resolution at its annual session at Lahore.

What is significant is that this and other important resolutions never referred to an Islamic state. Zafarulla Khan, a former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, summed up the political movements which culminated in the demand for Pakistan: 'Below the surface there was a

medley of racial, cultural, and religious groupings and patterns which began to be agitated as soon as the prospect of the devolution of political authority on the people of India became a possibility. As the process of the transfer of political authority proceeded, this agitation increased and sharp conflicts developed. The main struggle took shape between the two largest sections of the population, Hindu and Muslim. The objective was political; the urge was economic; the dividing line was cultural. As the conflicting cultures were both based or purported to be based, upon religion, the conflict assumed the character of a religious struggle, particularly on the Muslim side.'

### SEEDS OF REVIVALISM

As Nehru often reminded his countrymen the communal point of view, even when it was manifested by a modernist like Jinnah, was basically medieval approach because it gave a prominent place to religion in political activities. Although one can theoretically make a distinction between the combination of communalism and secularism on the one hand and theocracy and revivalism on the other, all these were mixed up in the minds of the people.

There was a tendency among some prominent leaders of the sub-continent to reject Western civilization and modern science and to revive the glorious period in Islamic history. The *Wahabi* movement of the early nineteenth century was a vehement and well-organized protest against religious corruption and took the form of a puritanical rejection of all accretions to the 'pure' Islam. It often took the form of a religious demand and a return to the simplicity of faith and society of the Prophet's Arabia. Occasionally it was turned against the 'infidel' rulers of the various states and was also accompanied by furious risings of the peasants against the landlords—infidels or not.

Many other conservatives maintained that Sye Ahmad Khan and Ameer Ali gave unnecessary concessions to Western thought. Some among them established 'Nadwatul Ulema' at Lucknow in 1894. This gradually became a centre of revivalist and in one sense reactionary activity.

We have already referred to the theological school founded at Deoband in 1867. The founder of the school, Muhammed Quasim Nantowi (1832-1880) held the view that God had the immediate and exclusive sovereignty over man. According to him, the two aims of the Deoband school were to propagate among the Muslim the pure teachings of the Quran and the Hadith and to keep alive the spirit of Jihad against the foreign ruler of India.

As noted earlier, some of these schools of thought were not directly connected with the demand for the creation of Pakistan because they were in fact opposed to it. That is why Bhutto, from his death cell, could sum up the attitude of the Muslim orthodoxy towards Jinnah and his colleagues, who led movement for the establishment of Pakistan in the following words: '(These people who do not have any knowledge of Islam



from the beginning, to consider them qualified for the leadership of Muslims only because they are experts in Western politics or specialists in a Western type of organisation, and because they are saturated with love of their nation—to do so shows a total ignorance of Islam and betrays an un-Islamic morality. (b) Those by being decided by the words "Muslim" consider as Muslim an organisation which follows the ways of "Jahiliyat" and think this type of organisation will be useful from the Islamic point of view—their stupidity deserves to be mourned. (c) What a pity that from the Quaid-i-Azam of the League down to the League's followers, there is not one who would have an Islamic mind or sensibility and an Islamic way of thinking and who would look at affairs from an Islamic view-point. (d) As a Muslim, I have no interest in the issue of Muslims establishing a State or forming a government in those areas of India where they are a majority.<sup>6</sup>

Such summing up of Maulana Maudoodi's views by Bhutto is pertinent. He was however wrong in assuming that just because Maulana Maudoodi and his organisation, the Jamaat-e-Islami, were not directly involved in the movement for the establishment of Pakistan, they would not have much power in the state when once it was created. Far from it, the political and social forces moved in the direction in which they became powerful factors. In India also, the Hindu communalists did not make any sacrifice during the nationalist movement. In fact they opposed it. But when once the country became free, they became powerful factors in society and politics. Even Gandhi's martyrdom and Nehru's downright condemnation of communalism and the championing of secularism did not make them completely powerless. And Pakistan had no Gandhi or Nehru to condemn communalism or champion secularism. So, the conservative and frankly revivalist organisations had a larger share of power and influence in that country.

#### THE JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI

One of the strongest among them was the Jamaat-e-Islami. Maulana Maudoodi, its founder, was born on 25 September 1903 and he died in 1979. Until 1947 he and his organisation were active in India. And then Maudoodi moved to Pakistan and led the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan. Maulana Maudoodi's book, *Towards Understanding Islam*, published in 1930 made him one of the well-known authorities on Islam. In the entire sub-continent, he and the Jamaat-e-Islami, founded in 1941, became the force behind the movement for the establishment of an Islamic state. Although he and his organisation never associated themselves with the Muslim League and the demand for Pakistan before 1947, after the establishment of Pakistan, he and the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan became significant forces in that country. In India, and after 1971 in Bangla Desh, the Jamaat-e-Islami became insignificant in the political fields.

In 1938 Maudoodi explained the political theory of Islam as follows: '.....the main characteristic of an Islamic state that can be deduced from these express statements of the Holy Quran are as follows: (1) No

person, class or group, not even the entire population of the state as a whole, can lay claim to sovereignty. God alone is the real sovereign; all others are merely his subjects. (2) All legislative power vests in God. The believers cannot frame any law for themselves nor modify any law which God has laid down even if the desire for such legislation or change in Divine law be unanimous; and (3) An Islamic state must, in all events, be founded upon the law laid down by God through His prophet. The Government which runs such a state shall be entitled to obedience in its capacity as a political agency set up to enforce the laws of God and only in so far as it acts in that capacity'.

The statement makes it clear that Islam as viewed by Maudoodi is not a democracy; for democracy is the name given to that particular form of Government in which sovereignty ultimately rests with the people, in which legislation depends both in its form and content on the force and direction of public opinion and laws are modified or altered to correspond to changes in that opinion.<sup>7</sup>

The organization of the *Jamaat-e-Islami* was also based on authoritarianism. In the first conference held in 1941, Maudoodi was chosen as the Amir. Until he shifted to Pakistan, he was the supreme leader of the organisation in undivided India and later he became the supreme leader of the organisation in Pakistan until his death in 1979.

Maudoodi and his followers were not at first enthusiastic about the creation of Pakistan. But when it became inevitable, they supported it. They also however decided to launch a movement in Pakistan in favour of an Islamic state and in having its law and constitution on the basis of the Quran. Maudoodi declared: 'I honestly believed, and still believe, that it was my duty to remind the Muslims that their objective should be not just the setting up of a Muslim national state but the setting up of an Islamic state, and that they should try to build up the personal qualities and character which are essential for the tasks involved.'<sup>8</sup>

#### IQBAL AND RELIGIOUS REVIVALISM

Muhammad Iqbal (1876-1938) was a poet, thinker and leader who made a great impact on the mind of the Muslims of India and Pakistan. As we noted earlier, he did inspire many people who were inclined towards many modern and radical ideas and movements. But there were many contradictions in his speeches and many champions of the establishment of Pakistan claimed that they inherited the legacy of Iqbal. As he died in 1938, he was not directly involved in the movement for the partition of the country because it took concrete shape only in 1940 and after.

In many of his speeches and writings, Iqbal emphasized the unique character of Islamic civilization and claimed that the Muslim society was different from other societies. In a letter to Jinnah, he wrote on May 21, 1937: 'After a long and careful study of Islamic law, I have come to the conclusion that if the system of law is properly understood and applied, at least the right to

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The first occasion when the Muslim League put forward concrete proposals on constitutional matters was in March 1929. These, known as Jinnah's fourteen points stated : 'The League after anxious and careful consideration most earnestly and emphatically lays down that no scheme for the future constitution of the Government of India will be acceptable to Musalmans of India until and unless the following basic principles are given effect to and provisions are embodied therein to safeguard their rights and interests : (1) The form of the future constitution should be federal with the residuary powers vested in the provinces. (2) A uniform measure of autonomy would be granted to all provinces. (3) All legislatures in the country and other elected bodies should be constituted on the definite principles of adequate and effective representation of Minorities in every province without reducing the majority in any province to a minority or even equality. (4) In the central legislature, Musalman representation shall not be less than one third. Representation of communal groups shall continue to be by means of separate electorate as at present, provided it shall be open to any community, at any time, to abandon its separate electorate in favour of a joint electorate. (6) Any territorial redistribution that might at any time be necessary shall not in any way affect the Muslim majority in the Punjab, Bengal, and the North-West Frontier Province.

Jinnah's fourteen points also included the demand that provisions should be made in the Constitution to give Muslims an adequate share, along with other Indians, in all the services of the state and in local self-governing bodies having due regard for the requirements of efficiency. All these were obviously secular demands.

By March 1940 the League went many steps further and passed the celebrated Pakistan resolution which stated: Resolved that it is the considered view of this session of All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principle, viz., that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial adjustments as may be necessary, that the area in which the Muslims are numerically in the majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituents shall be autonomous and sovereign.<sup>23</sup>

It is significant that the Muslim League and its leaders like Jinnah rarely made a reference to Islamic

*Pakistan had no Gandhi or Nehru, demn communalism or champion secularism. So, the conservative and frankly religious organisations had a larger share of political influence in that country.*

State or the construction of the state on the Islamic principles.

But the champions of the Islamic state occasionally point out some extracts from speeches to support their point of view. For instance, he said in March 1944 : 'Pakistan means freedom and independence but the ideology.....our bed-rock and sheet-stone is Islam. We are one and we move as one nation then shall we be able to retain Pakistan'.<sup>25</sup> he said in November 1945 : 'It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. The two religions in the strict sense of the word, but are different and distinct social orders and it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever have a common ideology.'<sup>26</sup>

The two-nation theory, as it was often referred to, was never fully defined. It only asserted that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations. Iqbal and Jinnah made this interesting observation in his study entitled *Religion and Politics in Pakistan*. Islamic government, Islamic state and Islamic community were the slogans of the last years of the empire at the first of independence; but no one was quite sure what they meant. Sometimes the leaders of the Muslim League admitted that the Islamic spirit was yet to be defined. More often however, they spoke as if they knew exactly what sort of state was required by the principles of Islam. Emphasis upon the evolution of an Islamic state was really an answer to the insistence of the 'ulama' that the nature of an Islamic state was already known or knowable, in accordance with the established legal system of traditional Islam. The fact is though that neither the politicians nor the 'ulama' had any definite plan when independence suddenly came upon them.<sup>27</sup>

Jinnah and his colleagues were to some extent of the confusion created by the last phase of the tion for the demand of Pakistan. During this p not only the grievances of the Muslim minority in



the safeguard of their interests, but metaphysical questions connected with the interrelation between religion and society became a part of the political controversies. Some Muslims also felt that the partition of the sub-continent into two states of Pakistan and India would have disastrous consequences for the Muslims in India. Realizing this, Jinnah stated: 'In the first place wrong idea and false propaganda appears to have been set in motion in order to frighten the Muslim minorities that they would have to migrate *en bloc* wholesale. I wish to ensure my Muslim brethren that there is no justification for this insidious misrepresentation. Exchange of population, however, on the physical division of India as far as possible will have to be considered. Secondly the Muslim minorities are wrongly made to believe that they would be worse off if left in the lurch in any scheme of partition or division of India. I must explain that the Musalmans, wherever they are in a majority, cannot improve their position under a united India or under the central government. Whatever happens, they would remain a minority. They can rightly demand all the safeguards that are known to any civilised government to the utmost.....In my opinion after the present tension created by the ambition of one community dominating over the other and establishing supremacy over the point of view is eased, we will find better understanding and : 'Pakistan will created all round. The division of India will then throw a great responsibility upon the majorities in their respective zones to create a real sense of security among the minorities and win their complete trust and confidence.'

This was Jinnah's genuine hope. It was manifested when he told the members of the Pakistani Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947: 'You may belong to any religion or caste or creed, that has nothing to do with the business of state.... We are starting with the fundamental principle that we are all citizens of one state. We should keep that before us as our ideal and you will find in course of time that Hindus will cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of state'. The students of contemporary politics of Pakistan know that this is not so. What happened on the other hand there, was an increasing emphasis on the role of religion in Pakistan. There are very few Hindus who are citizens of Pakistan today. There was a fairly large number of them in East Pakistan which became the separate state of Bangla Desh in 1972.

One of the legacies of the Muslim League was the intense hatred it aroused towards the Hindus. The Muslim League made a call for direct action on July 24, 1946. It stated: 'The council of the All-India Muslim League is convinced that now the time has come for the Muslim Nation to resort to direct action to achieve honour and to assert their just rights, to vindicate their Pakistan to get rid of the British slavery and the contemplated future caste-Hindu domination..... The Council directs the Working Committee to prepare forthwith a programme of direct action to carry out the policy enunciated above and to organize the Muslims for the coming struggle to be launched as and when

necessary.' The Muslim League did not clash with the British government during 'Direct Action' which followed. It was primarily directed against the Hindus—that too against the unarmed Hindus where they were in a minority. In Calcutta a 'great killing' took place. This was followed by the widespread communal riots in all parts of the country. A large number of innocent Muslims were killed in Bihar where they were in a minority. During the communal riots in the sub-continent on the eve of the partition and immediately after it, perhaps, as many Muslims were killed as Hindus.

But there were some basic differences. On the one side was a Gandhi who was prepared to lay down his life to stop the riots and the killing of the Muslims and Nehru who frankly and courageously tried to champion the concept of a secular state. And on the other side the political forces moved in a direction of forming an Islamic state. There was no apostle of peace and no champion of secular state in Pakistan who had the prestige of a Gandhi or Nehru. And while the leaders of India made partially successful attempts to give place of honour and position in the government and elsewhere to the Muslims, no such attempt was made to give Hindus any such position in 'Pakistan'. On the other hand, the constitution of Pakistan stated that it was an Islamic state and that only a Muslim could be the head of the state. All these followed from the political orientation of the All India Muslim League before 1947 and from its legacy.

Jinnah and his colleagues, left to themselves, would not welcome these developments. Jinnah was trained in a British law school and practised very successfully as a lawyer with great distinction in the courts of the British government in India. His ambition was to become a Muslim 'Gokhale'—Gokhale was the striking example of a liberal leader. But by the time Jinnah emerged on the Indian political scene as a significant leader, the Indian nationalist movement was no more dominated by the liberals, but by the so-called 'extremists' who believed in militant agitation and not in constitutional methods. Later Gandhi, who advocated civil disobedience, became its supreme leader. And still later, Nehru with his radical socialist utterances and the championing of internationalism, became an important leader of the Indian National Congress. Gandhi's opposition to Hindu sectarianism and communalism was strengthened by his faith in non-violence and his views on social and economic reconstruction. And Nehru's championing of secularism was reinforced by his views on planning and internationalism.

Contrasted with these were the political orientation of Jinnah and his colleagues. In them there was a complete bankruptcy of thinking of these matters. Another public question which was the concern of Gandhi was the cultural regeneration of Indians connected with his stress on the mother tongues of the people. Here again, these Muslim leaders did not show any understanding. The only economic question they were concerned with was the exploitation of the Muslims by the Hindus. The only international questions on which they spoke were the matters connected with Turkey and

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the Arabs. An international development as the emergence of Fascism was hardly noticed by them. The only linguistic matter on which they expressed themselves was the place of Urdu which was not the mother tongue of the majority of those who later on became Pakistanis.

And the Muslim League in the Indian sub-continent also lacked a spiritual stamina because it was an ally of the alien government and against the nationalist movement. Occasionally at least, it became an instrument—though an unwilling one—of the 'divide and rule' policy of the British Government in India. Under the circumstances and in the absence of a clear-cut philosophy and strategy to conduct a political campaign, the 'direct action' initiated by the Muslim League ended up in disastrous communal riots and mass killings.

The Hindu communalist movement when compared to the Indian nationalist movement led by Gandhi and Nehru was not apparently a great political force in India. This was partly because the metaphysics of Hinduism was a very tolerant one. There was no single sacred book for the Hindus and there was no organised church. Moreover, the Hindus were the majority community and they were, taken as a whole, economically and educationally more advanced than the Muslims. Adherence to the territorial nationalism could serve their political and economic interests.

In spite of their metaphysics the social behaviour of the Hindus was very exclusive and very often intolerant of Muslims and others. The weakness of the Hindu communal organizations was, therefore, misleading. Hindu communalism existed within apparently nationalist and secular organizations. That was why when a communal riot took place the Hindus were at least, as ruthless in killing the Muslims as the latter were in killing the former. Being a majority and a privileged community the Hindu communalism could operate subtly and not as crudely as its Muslim counterpart did. But the fact of the matter is this: the Muslims experienced the effects of Hindu communalism and they reacted to it intensely. This was one of the great sources of strength for Muslim communalism in India which led to the demand for the establishment of Pakistan.

Many of the grievances of the Muslims were justified. Only the suggested redress had dangerous implications. This is what one noted in Pakistan after its creation. In the absence of a clear-cut political ideology the two-nation theory could easily lead to the emergence of the demand for an Islamic state.

The emphasis on the religious, if not theocratic, element in the two-nation theory gave the impression that the demand for the establishment of Pakistan was the culmination of the movement of forces set in motion by the reactionary phase of 'Islamic modernism' which gathered great strength and momentum in the decade preceding 1947. But a careful analysis will reveal that Pakistan inherited the higher phases of the intellectual and cultural movements of Indian Muslims as well as the later phase. Pakistan's ideology, if there is anything like that, is not, therefore, just the two-nation theory of

Jinnah but the many ideas and thoughts which have moulded the thinking of Indian Muslims during the last hundred years. It is not an accident that a book published in Pakistan on such a subject as 'The Cultural Heritage of Pakistan' refers to all of them.<sup>30</sup>

It was explicitly stated in it that 'Pakistan is a new state, is barely five years old' but as Dr. Mortimer Wheeler has shown in his *Five Thousand Years* Pakistan's roots lie deep in antiquity. Pakistan has been truly a cradle of civilization. The excavations at Mohenjo Daro in Sind and at Harappa in the Punjab—are as yet incomplete, but they are enough to show that a high level of civilization flourished in what is now Pakistan centuries before the Aryans came to the sub-continent. After that Taxila became a great centre of Buddhist and later on Indo-Greek civilization.

This claim to cultural heritage may be a little far fetched. But the legacy of the ideas and movements which influenced the Indian Muslims during the past hundred years were certainly a factor in contemporary Pakistan. And these ideas were a combination of religious revivalism, Western liberalism and modern concepts such as socialism and social justice. The leaders like Jinnah and Iqbal combined in themselves some of these mutually contradictory ideas. Both the advocates of revivalism and modernism in Pakistani politics quote the statements of these leaders in support of their views.

It is too early to say that in the struggle between the legacy of revivalism and that of modernism which one is victorious over the other. What is apparently defeated now can very well emerge as the victorious party later. Moreover, these two trends cannot be separated from one another. There were modern elements in the thought of the revivalist groups and revivalist elements in the so-called champions of modernism. For instance it is almost impossible to place Iqbal, Maulana Azad or Muhammad Ali in one category or the other.

Many references to Iqbal have already been made. Some extracts from the writings of Abul Kalam Azad (1885-1958) and Maulana Mohammad Ali (1879-1930) are given below to indicate the complex nature of their thought and its legacy. Azad was the most outstanding figure among the Nationalist Muslims, that is, those Muslims who stood with the Indian National Congress in its struggle against the British rule and who opposed the political activities of the Muslim communalists who stood for 'separatist demands' which culminated in the demand for the establishment of Pakistan. But unlike Syed Ahmed Khan and Jinnah, he gave a religious reason for his political activities. In one of his articles, written as early as in 1913, he made the plea for the establishment of the Party of God and stated: 'It is commonly said that the recent turmoils and calamities that befell the Muslim world have created signs of awareness among the Muslims as were totally non-existent a couple of years ago..... That wise and Almighty Being who brings an insignificant seed to the stage of a magnificent vegetational entity and then



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creates for that entity again a thousand seeds, it is only in His hands to grant permanency to awakening fruitfulness to lessons and transform apparently moving but actually dead bodies into alive and stable forms.<sup>32</sup> Maulana Azad never divorced religion from politics and his loyalty to Indian nationalism was based on his conviction that Islam enjoined upon the Muslims to fight for freedom.

Maulana Muhammad Ali also said that he was a Muslim first and everything else afterwards. As a Muslim, I must be free and subject to no autocrat who would demand from me obedience to his orders in defiance of those of God.<sup>33</sup> Unlike Azad, Muhammad Ali did not stand consistently with the Indian National Congress. But he was firmly anti-imperialist throughout his public life.

### THE TOTAL IMPACT OF DIFFERENT TRENDS

To sum up the various shades of political thinking among the Indian Muslims before 1947:

(1) A group which emphasized the importance of loyalty to the British government in India and wanted the Muslims of the country to learn English language and organize their society on Western lines. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan represented this trend. And he became active fifty years after Raja Ram Mohan Roy preached similar ideas. In other words, there was a gap of fifty years between the thinking of Hindu leaders and the Muslim leaders. And this gap promoted the separatist tendencies among the Muslims. Syed Ahmad Khan wanted the Muslims to keep away from the rudiments of a political agitation associated with the establishment and the early phase of the Indian National Congress. In those days, it was even maintained by these leaders that foreign rule should be preferred to majority rule.

(2) In the second phase were Muslim leaders who

advocated that the Muslims must have their own political organisation to put forward their demands and, if necessary, make constitutional agitation for the purpose. The Muslim League was created in 1906 for this purpose. This was almost twenty-two years after the Indian National Congress and again manifested the gap between the two communities. The first activities of the Muslim League were an almost word-for-word repetition, along communal lines, of those of early Congress twenty years before. In a quite clerical atmosphere the men concerned, protesting their imperial loyalty, pointed out that they did not have quite enough influence nor enough jobs. At the first session the resolutions passed related to adequate Muslim representation in the new Councils, to Muslim places in the public service and to Muslim loyalty.<sup>34</sup> In its early phase the Muslim League did not rule out co-operation with the Indian National Congress and other organizations.

(3) Later, when the Congress moved towards militant political agitations like the Non-Cooperation movement, the civil disobedience and Quit India campaigns, the Muslim Leaguers not only kept away from them, but to some extent co-operated with the British government. The League leaders and their followers were not in a position to participate in any militant campaigns until 1946 — again indicating the relative backwardness of political consciousness among them. This culminated in the demand for the creation of Pakistan. Jinnah became the symbol of this trend of thought. It is, however, significant that there was practically no revivalist or fundamentalist religious approach among them.

(4) The religiously inclined leaders among the Muslims were either with the Congress or, at least, against the League. Maulana Azad, Muhammad Ali, the Deoband school and the Jamaat-e-Islami were examples. The League could mobilize the Muslim masses, but these religiously orthodox people could not. In any political encounter between the two groups, it was the League which won. The implications of this fact were never comprehended by the Indian nationalist leaders like Gandhi and Nehru.

(5) There is, however, an important legacy of these fundamentalist organisations like the Jamaat-e-Islami and its leaders. By their intellectual contributions, they made a powerful impact on the Muslim mind—at least on the mind of a significant section of an active group of Muslims. This group rejected the idea that the western civilization had some merits and wanted to reorganize the Muslim society and political institutions on the basis of what they considered to be pure Islam.

(6) Another trend was Pan-Islamism which manifested itself on two levels. Occasionally it expressed itself by the view of some Muslim leaders that unlike the Indian nationalists, the Muslims in India could not afford to displease the British Government because they had to take into account the interests of the Muslims in other countries. But when some of these Pan-Islamists felt that the British Government worked against the Muslim interests abroad, they were prepared to function

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as the allies of the non-Muslims in India in the political agitations against the government in India. The Khilafat agitation of 1921 was symbolic of this trend. In some respects their intermingling of religion and politics resembled the extremist agitation of 1906-1908 among the Hindus.

(7) A post-philosopher like Iqbal stood as a class apart. In some respects, he was a revivalist. He was also a pan-Islamist and 'separatist' in Indian politics. But in some fields, he gave the impression that he was a progressive and a national thinker.

The uneven nature of the political consciousness of the Hindus and that of the Muslims was, to some extent, the result of historical factors and the uneven nature of the economic and educational progress of the two communities. While the Muslims, who were the erstwhile rulers of major parts of the country, resisted learning the language of the new masters of the country, who had deprived them of their power and influence, the Hindus took to Western education and made use of the opportunities offered by it in the government and other walks of life. Under the Mughal rule a small section of the Muslims—the elite—enjoyed privileged positions in the administration and some of them were big landowners. The habits and customs of descendants of this group, which were created by these positions of security and comfort were not conducive to their taking advantage of the new economic activities offered by the British rule and Western impact on India. There were very few Muslim industrialists in the country and the number of doctors, lawyers and civil servants among them was also not in proportion to their total number. And the Hindus, by their exclusiveness, made it difficult for the Muslims to enter those fields of activities which were dominated by them.

The Muslims thus became educationally, economically and socially more backward than the Hindus. And they were not, therefore, ready for radical action against the British authority while the Hindus were. The first item in their agenda was to keep up with the Hindus in the field of education and economic activities. When this development was coupled with the deliberate policy on the part of individual Englishmen and the British government to placate the community which was comparatively less radical politically, the political differences were accentuated. But none of these could raise the demand for an Islamic state.

That came from the superstructure of ideas and institutions connected with the religion of Islam. Iqbal and Maulana Maudoodi, with their tremendous intellectual powers, gave these ideas an interpretation which emphasized the opinion that Islam was as much concerned with temporal matters as with spiritual questions. Presiding over the All India Muslim League, Iqbal observed in 1930: 'In India and elsewhere, the structure of Islam as a society is almost entirely due to the working of Islam as a culture inspired by a specific cultural ideal. What I mean to say is that Muslim society with its remarkable homogeneity and inner unity, has grown to be what it is under the pressure of the

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*There were no powerful protestant movements in Indian Islam. There was an Ahamedia movement. It did not get the public support the Gandhian movement did among the Hindus. Perhaps now, after a gap of many years, protestant movement like the one that Gandhi initiated among the Hindus, may emerge among the Muslims of the sub-continent. Pakistan may be the favourable soil for such movement to take roots.*

laws and institutions and the culture of Islam.....Islam does not bifurcate the unity of men into an irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter. In Islam God and the universe, spirit and matter, church and state are organic to each other.<sup>37</sup>

Maulana Maudoodi described the Islamic state in the following words: 'An Islamic state must, at all events, be founded upon the law laid down by God through His Prophet. The government which runs such a state shall be entitled to obedience in its capacity as a political agency set up to enforce the laws of God and only in so far as it acts in that capacity.'<sup>38</sup>

The agencies which used to spread these messages were as much important as their content. Apart from socio-religious organizations such as the Jamaat-e-Islami the Ulema and the mosques were extensively used for this purpose. Although the adherents to these views never received substantial political support from the Muslims before 1947, they were not intellectually challenged in a big way by the champions of other views.

There were no powerful protestant movements in Indian Islam. There was an Ahamedia movement. It did not get the public support as the Gandhian movement did among the Hindus. On the contrary, it became only a sect and it was not difficult for the orthodox people to maintain that they were not authentic and genuine Muslims. Perhaps now, after a gap of many years, a protestant movement like the one that Gandhi initiated among the Hindus, may emerge among the Muslims of the subcontinent. Pakistan, where there is no need for emphasizing the separate identity of Muslims, may be the favourable soil for such movements to take roots. And when such a movement will take shape, its leaders may try to make it compatible with the scientific temper of the modern west.



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## THE BLACK AMERICAN

by

George V. Perry

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SECULAR DEMOCRACY







# Communalism & Regionalism

## Products Of Secularisation

By GIRILAL JAIN

Secularism

WHILE there is no dearth of Indians who question the validity of the concept of secularism for their country, no Indian has ever disputed that it is an antidote to communalism. This is truly extraordinary and stands of the grip a slogan can acquire on our collective mind.

Currently a debate is on in the media on the proper meaning of secularism. In this debate the modernists and the modernisers have argued that secularism should not be interpreted as equal respect for all religions or as non-discrimination on religious grounds, as we in India have done all these years. Instead secularism must be interpreted in the original sense of separation of the church and the state and an assertion of the supremacy of reason in the life of the individual and society.

Like much else, this debate arises out of a misapprehension of the western experience to ourselves and an "idealisation" of the western reality. The first point is easily settled. For there can be no question of separation of the state and the church in societies such as ours which do not possess a church in the western-Christian sense of the term.

The second assertion regarding the supremacy of reason is also open to question on two counts. First, it proclaims that Christianity has ceased to be a potent force in the West which is not the case. It is common knowledge, for instance, that the Vatican has played an important role in shaping the politics of Italy and ensuring the survival in office of Christian democrats for over three decades. While the Vatican has not been similarly influential in other West European countries, Christianity as such has been. Christian Democrats have ruled in West Germany most of the time since World War II. In Poland in eastern Europe the Catholic church acts as the guardian of Polish nationalism in its struggle against Russian domination, a fact which even the communist rulers cannot ignore. Above all, we have witnessed the rise of the "born again" Christian phenomenon in the United States, the birthplace of secular politics.

### False Statement

Secondly, the statement implies that superstition and not reason has been the dominant influence in non-European civilisations, including, if not especially, ours. This is one of the many falsehoods which western orientalisks spread about us and which we have bought so much so that even our great leaders have been influenced by them. One has only to read Indian history by James Mill in the 19th and by Vincent Smith in the 20th century to know how they have misrepresented us and yet dominated our thinking.

Finally, the debate has proceeded on the erroneous assumption that communalism and secularism are two poles with nothing in between. In reality communalism, as we know it, is the result of the impact of western (secular) education on the different segments of our society. And so are regionalism and casteism of which we have not yet heard the last. Indeed, it is on the cards that as the process of modernisation (secularisation) gathers momentum, the threat to the country's unity from these forces may increase rather than decrease and disappear. To appreciate the validity of this conclusion, it will be useful to re-examine the history of the rise of Muslim separatism.

Pakistani historians have traced Muslim separatism/communalism back to the invasion of Sind by Mohammad Bin Qasim in the 8th century. This is a self-serving view which has little support in historical evidence. For at least up to the end of the 17th century the Indian Muslims were not sufficiently self-aware and well defined. They carried many Hindu social practices with them into Islam and preserved them. Most of them did not even have Muslim names. They were also not a ruling community because the ruling elite under various Muslim dynasties and rulers came from Persia or Turks. The illusions of grandeur in this regard were the products of a much later period. These were born during the British

Then there is the second school of historians which traces the rise of Muslim separatism/communalism to Shah Wali-Ul-Allah in the early 18th century. There is more merit in this proposition than in the previous one. But the Shah was a revivalist who sought to prevent the adaptation of Islam to the Indian cultural environment, and to link it with the Arab Islam. In other words, he was a pan-Islamist and not a potential father of Indian Muslim nationalism.

### Aligarh School

The turning point, in my opinion, was the rise of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh school of Muslim modernisers. Three points about Sir Sayyid are well known—that he sought to reconcile the Muslim elite and through it the Muslim populace to the British rule; that he tried to re-interpret the Koran so that it could be seen to be in conformity with modern science; and that he campaigned against Muslims joining the Congress. There is, however, another point about him which deserves attention. Sir Sayyid was the first prominent Indian Muslim leader who said goodbye to pan-Islamism. In the specific context of India, he laid the basis of modern Muslim communalism.

This Muslim communalism might not have been possible without the revivalism (Arabisation) which Shah Wali-ul-Allah had initiated in the early 18th century; for without it Muslims might not have become sufficiently distinguishable from the Hindus. But Muslim communalism did not represent an attempt at reaffirmation of orthodox Islam. It was the result of introduction of western (secular) education and of the attempt to reinterpret the scriptures to make them acceptable to modern (rational) men. Indian Muslim communalism was a form of radicalism. It represented a departure from orthodox Islam. By that reckoning, only a modernist such as Mohammad Ali Jinnah could lead it and not the Muslims assembled in Deoband or Lucknow.

There is no fatal inevitability in human affairs. So it is impermissible to argue that Jinnah was a logical successor to Sir Sayyid, or that it was unavoidable that he raised the demand for a Muslim homeland, or that he was bound to succeed in dividing the country. But if Sir Sayyid's legacy had to be picked up, only a modernist like Jinnah could have done so; similarly, the Muslim could be mobilised only on the separate homeland platform after the pan-Islamic platform had collapsed with the abolition of Khilafat by Turkish nationalists themselves.

When the Muslim League under Jinnah's leadership adopted the Pakistan demand at its Lahore session in 1940, the Muslims were not a viable political community by any definition. The League had fared badly in the provincial elections in 1937 in reserved constituencies. In all Muslim-majority provinces local parties serving dominant local interests in co-operation with similar non-Muslim interests opposed to the Congress had captured power. All in all, it is unlikely that Jinnah could have made the League the formidable power it became by 1945 and himself emerged as the main spokesman of Indian Muslims if circumstances had not been highly propitious.

### Cripp's Mission

The Congress had quit office and its leaders had courted imprisonment, leaving the field open to the League; affronted by Gandhiji's opposition to the war effort, the British openly sided with the League; and as early as 1942, that is barely two years after the adoption of the Lahore resolution by the League, the British government indicated through the Cripps mission its willingness to accept the principle of partition. But even if the League had been kept in check, if Jinnah had died a frustrated man and India had achieved independence without partition, Muslim communalism could not have been contained forever. The seed Sir Sayyid (or British teachers) had sown was bound to grow into a tree and bear fruit.

While the Muslims had become sufficiently united against the Hindus to be able to force partition, they had not become a nation in their own right. This became apparent within years of partition. Pakistan virtually banned immigration of Muslims from India, thus repudiating the concept of a Muslim homeland; for all practical purposes the Muslim League disappeared as an effective instrument of forging unity among the country's different linguistic-ethnic-cultural units; these units began to resent Punjab's domination, exercised through the army and the bureaucracy, and to pull in different directions, culminating finally in the establishment of an independent Bangladesh. But it does not follow that the Muslim assertion could have got dissipated and been contained in united India. On the contrary, with the help of the bogey of Hindu domination it could have got consolidated.

Once Pakistan came into existence, the other divide in the sub-continent (language) began to operate in that country. The same divide did not become equally effective in India partly because the Congress party, much better led and organised, was able to cater to the aspirations of various language groups, partly because democracy provided a safety valve, and partly because no one unit dominated India as Punjab unit dominated Pakistan. But the current upsurge of extremism and terrorism in Punjab does not leave much room for complacency for us. This upsurge too is the result of the impact of modernisation (secularisation) on the Sikh youth. Bhindranwale was not a fundamentalist in the sense that he wanted to restore the past. He was only using religious symbols in the pursuit of an independent Khalistan. How are we to cope with the problem of national integration? This would form the subject of another article.







October 1906

# The Hindu-Muslim Problem

## Residue Of An Old Conflict

By GIRILAL JAIN *Communalism*

SOME leftists and secularists have resented adversely to my article "The Hindu Backlash: Ghost That Fails To Rise". To begin with, I was taken by surprise by this reaction. For I had not advocated a backlash; on the contrary I had argued that the Hindus lacked the necessary coherence to be able to function as a religious community in the sense this term is generally understood. Then I realised that the leftists and the secularists in question were angry with me precisely because I did not treat the Hindus just as another community.

I do not wish to try and apportion blame for communal violence which erupts from time to time in different places. I do not believe it is desirable or even possible to do so on an objective basis. A riot in Ahmedabad is different from one in western U.P. and the causes need to be separately investigated in each case. Apart from the old Hindu-Muslim antagonism, a number of other factors go into the creation of a situation which lends itself to repeated incidents of violence as in Ahmedabad and Baroda in recent years, the decline of the textile industry, for instance.

It follows that the earlier article could not be inspired by the desire to exonerate the Hindus and blame the others, especially the Muslims, for communal violence. The purpose was quite different. It was to show that most of the commentators had got stuck with a wrong formulation and to try and persuade them to move away from it. I believe that once the truth of the proposition that the Hindus are not and cannot become a community in the sense the minorities are communities begins to be recognised, our approach to the communal problem can acquire greater clarity.

On the basis of the kind of reasoning I advanced in that article a leading commentator has gone so far as to argue that India consists of many nations, that the nations are rooted in the major languages of India (incidentally, with the exception of Urdu, all of them are creations of the Hindus) and that instead of trying to become a nation-state (in the European sense), the Indian state should be a "state of many nations". This represents the other extreme which is as invalid. If the Hindus are not a religious community in the normal sense of the term, they are also not divided into many nations on the basis of language. If they were, they could not have produced one freedom movement and stayed together as one country under one central state with a constitution which is as much unitary as it is federal. The Hindus are a complex people and they cannot be described in such simplistic terms.

### Computer Age

India can truly be said to be launched on a greater venture precisely because the Hindus are what they are. No one can predict what shape this venture will take. But the venture is a fact. The venture will also reshape the Hindus. Science and technology are great agents of change. We cannot live in the computer age the way we lived in the bullock-cart age. But that is not what is under discussion. The reference is to the social and political arrangements that will emerge as a result of the turbulence we are going through.

As suggested earlier, this turbulence in the country is also largely responsible for what we call upsurge of communalism in the country. We are giving an old name to a new phenomenon, though the old prejudices and memories are

also at work.

To be candid, when we talk of communalism, we have by and large the old Hindu-Muslim conflict in mind. But in a fundamental sense this issue has been resolved. We are dealing with the residue which, however troublesome, is nothing more than a residue of what was truly a gigantic conflict before 1947. So if I were asked for my response to the efforts some Hindu organisations are making to cope with the supposed threat from the Muslims, I would say that these are misplaced. And I would say this not just as a secularist but also as a self-conscious Hindu who is deeply interested in the survival and growth of the Hindu civilization.

The causes of the Hindu-Muslim conflict are complex and cannot be discussed in a newspaper article. In any case, the question has been so thoroughly discussed that it is not possible for me to add anything to it. I would only underscore one point. Which is that the conflict assumed menacing proportions because the British established and maintained a parity between the two. Incidentally that was partly why they introduced separate electorates. The nationalist movement accepted the separate electorates because it had no choice and it also accepted a parity between the two in cultural-civilizational terms. That is what the talk of India's composite culture implied.

We do not know what course India's development would have taken if independence had not been accompanied by partition. But while that is now a matter of only academic interest, it cannot be seriously denied that partition ended the parity between the Hindus and the Muslims in both political and in cultural-civilizational terms. After August 15, 1947, there could be no doubt that India of the future will be shaped, for good or ill, essentially by the Hindus. And it has been.

### Urban Dominance

It is immaterial for the purpose of this discussion whether one regards the Hindu civilization or the incoming Arab-Muslim civilization as superior. As I see things, civilizations are different; they are not superior or inferior; and the two under discussion here were without doubt very different. There can also be no doubt that the Arab-Muslim civilization prevailed during the Muslim rule and that it reshaped the personality of the urban Hindu elite. But while its dominance declined with the decline of the Moghul empire in the 18th century, the Hindu civilization could not reassert itself; apparently it did not possess the necessary vigour just as the Hindus did not possess the necessary resources to be able to take over power from the Moghuls in decline.

The contact with the British produced among the Hindus a reform movement which served as the basis of Indian nationalism. They were also quick to take advantage of Western education; this gave them entry into the administration and the professions in large numbers. These two developments together with the fact of their significant majority could have placed the Hindus in a dominant position under the Raj if, on the one hand, the Muslims too had not taken to Western education and, on the other, the British had not decided to end the discrimination against them and indeed to favour them. The policy produced a stalemate. While this stalemate led to partition, the partition ended the stalemate. The Hindus came into their own in what remained of India on August 15,

1947. This was a turning point for them, perhaps the most important in all their history.

There is a great deal of confusion regarding the nature of developments in this regard in post-independence India. Much of this confusion is the result of our continued use of the pre-independence vocabulary which in turn is the result of our refusal to take due note of so dramatic a development as the country's partition on the basis of religion and the consequent decline in the Muslim population in India. This changed the power realities and thus made the old formulations and stances at least partly invalid. I abolition of separate electorates for the minorities was a reflection of the new reality, so is the rise of Hindi in north India.

### Identity Question

The political leadership in independent India has had the sagacity to ensure that the minorities, especially the Muslims who constitute 11-12 per cent of the total population, enjoy all the rights of citizenship so that they do not feel driven into a corner, leaving them no choice but to fight back for their survival. The widespread acceptance of an Indian variant of the concept of secularism has facilitated this task of the ruling party and leadership. But this has not ill-served the cause of the Hindus. On the contrary, the emphasis on secularism, however defined, has helped the Hindus in two ways. It has prevented the growth of bitterness among the Muslims and it has promoted the cause of modernisation among the Hindus. This approach has had one apparent weakness; it has failed to attend to the question of Indian identity. But that is an expression of lack of coherence among the Hindus; the minorities cannot be blamed for it. For one neither bemoans this lack of coherence nor welcomes it. For if it poses a problem in respect of national identity, it facilitates our march into modernity. If the Hindu identity was well defined, it could have resisted the pull of the past, irresistible. And in the very act of moving into the modern world, the Hindus may acquire a unity they have never possessed before. Moreover, power in an era grows out of the drive of a computer.

It is widely believed that it would have been wonderful if a large section of the Muslims were not to resist joining the march into modernity. This belief is based on the assumption that such a development among the Muslims would have facilitated the growth of secular nationalism. The assumption is not self-proven. In any event, it is neither possible nor desirable to try and force the pace of change among them. Also their social conservatism cannot be said to create any special problems for the Hindus and does not, therefore, call for special remedial measures on the part of the latter.

In India we have mastered the art of evasion. We discuss both domestic and international issues at home in its various manifestations does not decisively shape events. The result cannot but be confusion on an enormous scale. This is what has happened on the Hindu-Muslim question. It is true, extraordinary that the Hindu should feel threatened in independent India which they cannot but dominate. Some Muslims may have behaved provocatively on occasions. This has apparently set in motion a chain of events which has strengthened the prejudice against them among the Hindus. But the cannot negate the whole range of developments since 1947.







# Communalism

## THE MONSTER OF COMMUNALISM

by RAJENDRA SAREEN

THE three-day discussion in the Lok Sabha last week on the communal situation in various parts of the country was in keeping with the character of the recurring and ebb of the tide of violence that rocks the country from time to time.

The debate started in great form with a moving exhortation from Speaker, Mr. Bal Ram Jaijhar. Initiating the discussion, Mr. Madhu Dandavate made a powerful impact with his deep understanding and lucid presentation of the issues involved in the recrudescence of communal conflagrations. On the second day Mr. P. Chidambaram, Minister of State for Internal Security, put up a brilliant performance. On the third day the Home Minister, Mr. B. D. Singh, disappointed with his rambling, repetitive and lack-lustre reply to a discussion which clearly deserved a much better response.

It is a pity that the Prime Minister did not decide to respond to the debate himself. He could have underscored the national determination to deal firmly with this arker in all its manifestations. One was reminded of the powerful speech made by his five-minute address to the nation on anti-Sikh riots had broken out in 1984 after the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The Prime Minister's speeches are sharp and incisive but his style is soothing and persuasive. He made a mistake, in keeping away from the debate.

### COMMITMENT

The debate had its bright patches. It also had cliché-ridden incantations. But the main merit of the exercise was that the entire House spoke out with one voice against the threat posed by the monster of communalism to the unity and integrity of the nation. Even the dull moments of the debate unmistakably reaffirmed the members' total commitment to secularism and the need to curb communalism.

The Speaker set the tone for the discussion by his emphasis on the need to break the nexus between religion and politics. He spoke of "the soul-searing anguish caused by communal violence (which) is unbearable." He reminded the House that the country had "paid a terrible price for this malaise in 1947. But we have not been able to root it out in the past 38 years. Instead, it is beginning to strangle us. There is urgent need to ponder over this problem collectively so that all parties join hands to banish this evil flourishing in the name of religion. Let there be a stringent law prescribing condign punishment for the evil men who trigger off communal violence."

Mr. Madhu Dandavate's was the first speech which was clearly the pacesetter. He spoke of the need for a policy to ensure that the people's minds remained indivisible. He wanted everybody to try to distinguish between the disease and the symptoms so that the roots of the malaise were taken care of instead of dealing with the symptoms superficially.

Mr. Dandavate was in favour of the freedom of religious practices consistent with the spirit of secularism. In his view religion is not the basis of riots. It is the aberration of the religion that comes in the way.

He spoke of the economic dimensions of communalism and the need to synthesize religious and national identity. He also dealt with the social, political and administrative aspects of the fight against communalism and the maintenance of law and order.

need to synthesise religious and national identity. He also dealt with the social, political and administrative aspects of the fight against communalism and the maintenance of law and order.

### RIGHT APPROACH

Mr. Dandavate regretted that the problem was sought to be tackled through a fire-brigade approach. It is only when a fire breaks out that fire engines rush to the spot. They extinguish the fire and return to their depot. And then firemen take off their uniforms and relax.

The other points made by Mr. Dandavate were:

- (1) Reservations on a communal basis for recruitment to the police and paramilitary and military forces would tend to communalise them. These do, however, have to be restructured so that their composition broadly reflects the nature of society. On that there was complete unanimity in the National Integration Council between the Government and the Opposition.
- (2) On occasions when there are indications of explosive tension, ceremonial functions should be postponed so that the security forces can maintain law and order without being diverted to look after the V.I.P.s' security.
- (3) Communal violence is a fallout of gang wars and rivalries among smugglers, law-breakers and racketeers. Hooligans are used as instruments of violence by anti-social elements. These elements should be rounded up.
- (4) The young should be made aware of the unifying role of religion. "We should teach the students not to become either atheists or religious bigots."
- (5) The fostering of composite culture is necessary.
- (6) Mixed community housing schemes and neighbourhood schools should be organised because segregated communal living is at the root of communal conflagrations.
- (7) Some balance has to be evolved between the religious feelings of people and the need to maintain peace and tranquillity. Rath yatras, Ganapati celebrations and Muharram are part of our religious tradition. Because a few hooligans create disturbances, it would be wrong to ban them. But trouble spots can be avoided and the trouble-makers who have not much faith in religion but a vested interest in trouble can be isolated.
- (8) "I am not in favour of destroying history and I am not in favour of mutilating history, but history must be taught with a correct and balanced perspective."
- (9) "Political forces must try to overwhelm the communal and anti-social elements. I think it is a blot on all of us sitting here together that in times of communal conflagration we all have failed in spite of 100 years of the Congress tradition, in spite of the 50 years' tradition of the Socialist movement and in spite of a long tradition of the Communist movement. A very strong base for a regional party has been created in Andhra Pradesh. Even with all

the strong bases, when the volcano of communalism erupts all of us are thrown helter skelter and our capacity to contain the monster of communalism is reduced to an absolute nullity."

The Gujarat riots being the most recent eruption, the discussion was understandably dominated by the ghastly events in that State. The general view was that this was not a riot which had taken place on the spur of the moment and that it was planned and organised.

Mr. G. G. Swell pointed out that Gujarat, a coastal State, had to face large-scale smuggling. The smugglers had both power and musclemen. Whenever there was a breakdown of law and order, these anti-social elements stood to benefit. It was, therefore, necessary to round them up to ensure that they did not create trouble.

Mr. Swell reminded the House that India was the one country in Asia, besides Japan, where real democracy prevailed. "The vastness, the size, the diversity and the built-in contradictions that India has in terms of differences in religions, languages and economic disparities could have torn this country apart. And yet we have grown from strength to strength in democracy. We have been able to do this because the different communities have understood that in living together lies the salvation not only of this country but also of each individual. If we are not able to control and contain the conflicts within the country, these would grow into such monsters as would destroy us."

Mr. Amal Datta (C.P.I.) posed the following question: "Has not the time come to put some fetters on the unlimited religious freedom practised in public in such a way that it not only causes inconvenience or annoyance to others but also leads to arson, communal disturbances, and loss of life and property?"

Mr. Jagan Nath Kaushal was of the view that "if the political will is there, no terrorism, communalism or extremism can prevail." He thought Parliament should seriously consider the making of a law to ban communal parties and ban them from contesting elections.

### ALLEGATION

Some members related how communal passions were aroused by the Vishva Hindu Parishad on the "Ram Janambhoomi" issue by telling the Hindus: "You are impotent cowards. Your God is under lock and key and you are keeping quiet."

A Muslim member asked: "What will happen if the Muslims lose faith in the system and take up arms for their security? Some Muslims talk of becoming terrorists like Sikhs."

Mr. Ranjit Singh Gaekwad felt that numerous Hindu organisations cropping up everywhere indicated that the majority community was feeling "unsure, unsafe and neglected." In his view the political "who instead of quietly clans" who instead of quietly making too much fuss are preventing the improvement of relations between the minority community and the majority community.

As against that, the Majlis-

Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen member from Hyderabad, Mr. Sultan Sahabuddin Owaisi, said: "Our feelings are being outraged. Each riot leaves a trail of destruction for the minorities. Innocent people are subjected to harassment in the aftermath. The P.A.C. resorts to the looting of houses, the ravishing of women and the breaking of bones. When complaints are made we are told that the police must not be demoralised."

Just when the discussion appeared to be getting into a rut, Mr. P. Chidambaram intervened to remind the House that the "whole nation is being held to ransom by a small number of people. Let the members of Parliament go back to their respective States and assert that secular, progressive, catholic and non-sectarian forces will continue to command and occupy the middle ground with the allegiance and support of the people."

### GUIDELINES

The main points made by Mr. Chidambaram were:

- (1) The guidelines prepared in 1980 and revised in 1985 had so far been accepted by 16 States. But these had been honoured more in their breach than in their observance. Had there been the necessary political will to implement them strictly, much of the communal violence people had seen could have been avoided.
- (2) As the cadre-controlling authority for the I.A.S. and the I.P.S., the Central Government is going to hold the District Magistrate and the S.S.P. directly responsible for incidents of communal violence.
- (3) Curbs and restraints should be imposed on religious processions which must be simple and symbolic and should avoid such routes as are sensitive.
- (4) The indiscriminate use of loudspeakers has the potential of creating communal tension and it is necessary to regulate their use in the interest of the maintenance of communal harmony and peace.
- (5) The Centre will monitor the recruitment from the minority communities into the police and paramilitary forces.
- (6) The training of the armed constabulary men in the States will be streamlined to ensure that the communal bias is removed and these formations inculcate the right attitude and correct the usual approach to various situations.
- (7) Special courts will be constituted to hold speedy trials of those who are involved in engineering communal riots.

The point that stood out in the discussion was that religious orthodoxy and obscurantism were out to assert themselves aggressively.

The question is: why is the political system unable to cope with this menace when most of the parties are committed to the ideal of secularism? The members of the Lok Sabha did not touch this aspect directly.

Herein lies the key to the problem. With political processes paralysed at the grassroots level, there is no scope for interaction among the various political factors. Each one of them stands insulated from the others except at the time of clashing. Unless this malaise is cured there cannot be a reversal of the evil trend.



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Root

turbulence—II

Communalism

# FAULOUT OF COMMUNAL DIVIDE

by RAJENDRA SAREEN

THE turbulence in Punjab politics emanates from the Akalis' quest for power. If the Barnala Government falls, it will not be as a result of "conspiracy" of the Centre but as that of the injured ego of the new spokesman of Sikh chauvinism, Mr Parkash Singh Badal.

It is perfectly legitimate for the Akalis to seek power, but then they cannot shirk their responsibility to evolve a basis for that within the parameters of the political system and the Constitution. Nor can they hope to retain power unless they observe the rules of the game inter alia as well as in relation to others. Any attempt to subvert or circumvent the basic requirements of the political game is bound to evoke resistance and, if the matters are taken beyond a certain point, invite retribution.

The Akalis' proclivity to arrogate to themselves a larger than life dimension in the politics of Punjab runs into a dead end for two reasons. On the few occasions they have succeeded in capturing power, their factional fighting has asserted itself in full measure. In the pursuit of conflict, they do not observe any restraint.

The ability of the Sikhs to play a dominant role in Punjab politics requires a coalition such as the Akalis now with the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. In the alternative, the Sikhs veer round to a secular party like the Congress as was the case until 1962. Even a 20 per cent shift in the Sikh vote can make the Congress win.

## COALITIONS

In the 1952, 1957 and 1962 elections, a larger number of Sikhs, contesting on the Congress ticket, got elected than was warranted by the community's numerical strength in the State. The Akalis put up a very poor show in these three elections. In 1967, it was a stalemate and the Akalis could capture power only in coalition with the Jana Sangh. In 1968, the Akali-Jana Sangh coalition contested the polls jointly and the Akalis were able to emerge as the largest single party. In 1971, on the other hand, when the Akali coalition with the Jana Sangh broke down, the Congress won a clear majority. In 1977, the Akali-Jana Sangh coalition swept the polls, leaving the Congress way behind. But the position was reversed in 1980, when the Congress emerged as the governing party.

It was only in September, 1985, and even then because of the extraordinary situation arising in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star, that the Akalis were able to win 73 of the 117 seats single-handedly against all other parties. However, after this massive win, the personality clashes among the Akalis split the party right through the middle.

There should be no doubt that the Akali desire to rule Punjab on its own, without adjustment or accommodation with other political factors, is unlikely to be fulfilled again in the foreseeable future. Nor is it realistic for the Akalis to expect that they can rule the State without evolving an effective framework for the participation of the Hindus, who constitute anything between 40 and 45 per cent of the population.

## PUNJABI SUBA

The experience of Akali-Jana Sangh coalitions during the past two decades has been that the arrangement operates to the advantage of the Akalis but serves to limit the Jana Sangh (now Bharatiya Janata Party - B.J.P.) prospects. The B.J.P. has invariably played a highly constructive and responsible role in curbing the process of communal polarisation in Punjab. In their view of things, the Hindus are not separate from the Sikhs. But the B.J.P. is unable to exercise any restraint on the factional fight among the Akalis or on their proclivity to subordinate the interests of the State as well as those of their coalition partner to the exigencies of their factional politics. Therefore, it is doubtful if the Hindu vote will swing in any big way in favour of a B.J.P.-Akali coalition.

In this connection, it is pertinent to recall that in 1965 when the demand for Punjabi Suba was revived, the Punjab Government document examining the matter pointed out:

"In dealing with the problem posed by the Akalis, it is necessary to understand that the real motivation for it is a desire for power... Since a Punjabi Suba is sought, albeit impliedly, as a means of capturing power which in the face of political realities may not materialise, the creation of a Suba will not mean an end of the trouble by the Akalis for achieving their ends.

"Unfortunately, the thought processes of the Akalis are still conditioned by medieval concepts, thinking in terms of political power wielded by religious or denominational communities. They have yet to become conscious of the impossibility of those concepts in relation to the present-day political realities. They seem to be deluding themselves that they will find a way of getting over the system of political majority by wielding power on the basis of joint electorates. The emphasis in their discussions and even public pronouncements is that the Hindus have got Hindustan, and the Muslims have got Pakistan, so the Sikhs must get Punjabi Suba.

"It is, therefore, absolutely certain that the next focus of their attack will be the very concept of secular nationalism as the basis of the Constitution and the system of joint electorates. This attack will inevitably derive strength from the realities of political frustration, economic hardships and strained communal relations which will be the necessary concomitants of Punjabi Suba. The State Government views such a contingency with grave anxiety because its experience is that the Akali leadership is totally devoid of any sense of proportion while engaged in whipping up mass hysteria to avenge its thwarted ambitions. The tone and temper of its pronouncements has always been highly provocative and inflammable.

"It will thus be seen that the expectation that the Akalis as a communal political force would vanish from the Punjab scene on the formation of Punjabi Suba is a fallacy arising out of wishful thinking and glossing over the hard facts. Therefore, the State Government would like to emphasise that conceding the Akali demand would solve no problem and instead is bound to create fresh complications."

## LOOSE ENDS

It is a painful story how the national leadership because of its political ineptitude mishandled the situation at that time to such an extent that a ghost which had been laid to rest by Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Partap Singh Kairon came alive again. By the time Indira Gandhi came on the scene in January, 1966, it was all over bar the shouting. Be that as it may, it is worth remembering that the Punjabi Suba demand was formally conceded by Indira Gandhi. The Akali leaders of those times could not make up their minds as to whether they wanted a larger Punjab with a marginal numerical majority of the Hindus or a smaller Punjab with a Sikh majority. In the event, many loose ends were left around, which over the time have got tangled into knots. The Indian nation as well as the people of Punjab, both the Hindus and the Sikhs, have to pay the price for that today. But the reorganisation of Punjab today is a settled fact.

Punjab and the Punjabis have become hostages to a series of acts of omission and commission on the part of political leaders. Then there are any number of grievances both the Hindus and the Sikhs have against each other. For some years now a cause-and-effect sequence has developed so that it becomes difficult to pinpoint when a grievance of one turns into the cause of the other's grievance. Not all these

are rooted in fact and reality even though quite a few of them are. But the passion with which both communities are ready to believe the very worst of each other is a problem in itself. The Punjabis, in fact, have gone far beyond the point where any useful purpose will be served by trying to determine who is wrong or how he is wrong, and on what. The psychiatrists' couch is utterly irrelevant. It is a now-or-never, do-or-die situation.

## MENTAL BLOCK

There is an impenetrable wall of misunderstanding around what the dissident Akalis project as the "wounded Sikh pride". This is not confined to disgruntled politicians, but is a widely shared perception and will have to be taken seriously. There is a legitimate aspect to it. The trauma of Operation Blue Star has understandably left a deep impact on the minds and hearts of the Sikhs. But the mental block that comes in the way of seeing the other facets of that tragedy is incomprehensible to the non-Sikhs.

The Bhindranwale phenomenon, with all that accompanied it from 1981 to 1984, cannot be wished away as a non-event. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, Operation Blue Star, Indira Gandhi's assassination and the anti-Sikh holocaust in Delhi and other cities have inflicted indelible scars on the psyche of both the Hindus and the Sikhs of Punjab. There have been numerous events and developments before, after and between the major ones. Among these are the spate of murders by the Bhindranwale men, the attempt to mobilise ex-servicemen to paralyse the Government in Punjab and sabotage the Asian Games, the indignities heaped on the Sikhs passing through Haryana in November, 1982, the violence let loose against the Sikhs at Panipat and Karnal in 1983, the treatment of the youth by the security forces in the wake of Operation Blue Star, the organisation of terror gangs to restart wanton killings of opponents as well as the innocent, the transistor bombs and bank robberies and, last but not the least, the rise of the "Senas".

All these and much else shall haunt this unfortunate land and stand to its disgrace for a long time. None of these things can be wiped off. The bitter memories will linger for a long time to come.

The administrative and political failures are, of course, responsible for a lot of what has happened. But these cannot by themselves account for all that has happened in Punjab. The people too have contributed by acquiescence, even when they have not connived at and abetted the depredations of the miscreants. The terrorists do

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# Communal divide

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not vanish into thin air after murder and massacre. They take shelter with people in their homes. They are protected and provided for. The police contacts of the terrorists are only another facet of this reality.

So do the Shiv Sainiks with their trishuls operate with popular consent and support. If they have not yet become as murderously effective as the Sikh terrorists, the reason is that they are late starters and have not had the advantage of foreign links for arms supply and training. Given time, they are bound to catch up with their Sikh cousins, and their potential for mischief is going to be as deadly as that of the early starters.

When the Naxalites became active in Punjab at the turn of the seventies, the authorities were able to liquidate them. But for some five years now, the terrorists have been able to operate with impunity. Why? The explanation lies in the sharp distinction between the Naxalites and the contemporary Punjab terrorists. The Naxalites fighting for the have-nots had to contend with the hostility of the haves in each village whereas the terrorists, as religious fanatics, are able to have the population of the villages to either support them actively or stand as passive spectators neutral on their side.

All this is not to denigrate the good sense displayed by the common man in not letting the communal divide go beyond a point. There have been numerous incidents of compassion, courage and sacrifice. But the damage has been caused nevertheless and essentially because evil did not evoke among the masses the repugnance and revulsion that it should have evoked. So, let there be an end to the hypocritical breast-beating about the mischief-makers of the community other than one's own.

There is no running away from the fact that the Hindu-Sikh relations have deteriorated. The traditional ties of social and family relationship are not entirely extinct but the strain is manifest. It is futile to shed tears over what has happened. One wishes it had not happened. It is a matter of anguish that it has come about. But the point is that it really has, and the

sensible thing would be to recognise this for what it is and then proceed to adjust to this painful reality. Bemoaning for a past that has gone into history is unlikely to help. The need is to look to the future.

in a secular society, nothing hinges on whether any two communities are branches of the same tree or distinct and separate from each other. It is no doubt a personal wrench for the mixed families. My father's sister married a Sikh gentleman and my uncle married a Sikh lady. My grandmother knew no scripture other than Guru Granth Sahib. This pattern of relationship is still around. But with all that, the political divide along communal lines is there.

If that is all there is to it, the answer lies in evolving a framework to manage the State's affairs on the basis that the Hindus and Sikhs are distinct and separate from each other. But that cannot, and indeed does not, validate the terrorist programme to annihilate the Hindus. Nor does it provide a basis for the Hindus to start organising a counter force to assault the Sikhs where they are in a minority. All that is a simple matter of the maintenance of law and order and the politicians who interfere with that are as guilty as the men who wield the guns and trishuls.

Proclaiming the murderers as martyrs is not calculated to heal the "wounded pride of the Sikhs". It is an attempt to feed the fostered sense of grievance among the Sikhs in pursuit of petty politics capable of inflicting great damage.

It is terribly perverse to pretend that the past five years have added to the "pride" of the Sikhs. On the contrary, the happenings during this period have served to stigmatise them in public consciousness. This is indefensible and unjustified. Steps must be taken to ensure that the sins of a few do not visit upon the innocent. There is no difficulty in appreciating the anguish caused to the devout Sikhs by police entry into the gurdwaras. But why is there a refusal to uphold the sanctity of the religious places by denying the criminals sanctuary there?

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sensible thing would be to recognise this for what it is and then proceed to adjust to this painful reality. Bemoaning for a past that has gone into history is unlikely to help. The need is to look to the future.

In a secular society, nothing hinges on whether any two communities are branches of the same tree or distinct and separate from each other. It is no doubt a personal wrench for the mixed families. My father's sister married a Sikh gentleman and my uncle married a Sikh lady. My grandmother knew no scripture other than Guru Granth Sahib. This pattern of relationship is still around. But with all that, the political divide along communal lines is there.

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## ON COMMUNALISM

Communalism

## Readers' Reactions

A large number of readers have reacted to the articles and news items on the communal situation published in this newspaper in recent weeks. For lack of space, it is not possible to print even a fraction of this correspondence. Moreover, most letters make the same points over and over again, often in intemperate language which is not conducive to reasoned debate. We have therefore decided to give only a sampling of the opinions expressed in the letters. This brings to a close the discussion in our columns provoked by the articles and news items. — Editor.

## THE HINDU-MUSLIM PROBLEM

by Girilal Jain (October 8)

*Mr Syed Shahabuddin, New Delhi:* The point of departure in Mr Jain's analysis is that on August 15, 1947, the Hindus came into their own. I think it is the Indian people, who, with all their diversities, came into their own. And without in any way detracting from the Hindu contribution to the making of India, its polity, economy, society, civilisation and culture, the present is the common heritage of all Indians and the future the common task of all Indians. Hence one cannot agree with Mr Jain's apathy towards what happens to the Muslim Indians.

*Mr S. S. Sathu, Jammu:* The Hindu has accepted the reality that the Muslims of India are a part of the nation. But there lies a huge responsibility on our Muslim brothers also to see that the sooner the hurt sentiments of their Hindu brothers are soothed, the better it will be for both.

*Mr Zafar Ahmad, Patna:* Even an enlightened Muslim fails to understand how a group of people to whom the very idea of equality and brotherhood till very recently happened to be almost alien ideas can become secular overnight. The irony is that those who do not have the strength to cling to their own ground owing to the inherent weaknesses of their creed tend to blame others in the name of non-adaptability and orthodoxy.

*Mr Bilal Ahmad, Saharanpur:* The question is simple: "What are the constituents of the Indian Nation?" If Mr Girilal Jain and the intellectuals of his kind do not think of Muslim Indians as an integral constituent of the Indian nation, and if they do not think that the great cultural heritage of Islamic hue has deep roots in the evolutionary process of Indian nationhood, then certainly the ghost of Mr Jinnah looms large in their sub-conscious. These intellectuals must note that the so-called Hindutva cannot create a cohesive Indian nationhood as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Azad and embodied in the basic structure of the Indian Constitution.

*Mr M. K. Bakshi, New Delhi:* Terrorism and communalism are the two evils which find nourishment in appeasement. When it is clear to them that their demands shall never be accepted and that they are sure to end up in loss of life and property, they cannot but give up. They are more unreasonable and demanding where opposing forces are weak, wavering and complacent. They are tough when we are soft. In approach they are consistent and steadfast, we are casual and oscillating.

## COMMUNAL TWIST

Letter to The Editor from Romila Thapar and 11 other historians

convert the monuments, why not do the same with persons too. Let us probe into the genealogy of individuals and trace their original religion centuries ago and reconvert them to their original religion?

*K. Roy, Bhubaneswar:* By trying to introduce a third dimension to the problem, in the shape of imaginary Buddhist, Jaina and animist shrines, the letter has tried to create a historical confusion in the name of historical analysis. The letter has questioned the historicity of Krishna and consequently the very concept of his birth place. When millions of Indians believe in the historicity of Shri Krishna and observe his birthday, dismissing the matter in such a light manner, is unfair to a large number of people.

*Syed Shahabuddin, New Delhi:* The letter mentions the Muslim demand "for the restoration to worshippers of dis-used mosques now under the care of the Archaeological Survey of India". I am not aware of any demand for the restoration of protected mosques to worshippers but there is a demand for the recognition of freedom of worship in protected mosques which has been curbed only recently.

There are any number of historic places of worship in our own country and abroad which are in live use day and night, as places of worship. I could cite the Jagannath Temple at Puri, the Meenakshi Temple at Madurai, the Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar, the Jama Masjid in Delhi, the Cathedral in Canterbury and St. Peters in Rome. How does the concept of a living monument conflict with historic or archaeological interest? The Muslim demand is not communal but religious; the refusal is not rational but communal.

*V. Sagar, New Delhi:* Romila Thapar and her colleagues often nation has to have its ethos and all the places associated with it are part of the national heritage. Both Ram and Krishna were national, and not communal, heroes.

*Thakur Onkar Singh Charak, New Delhi and 11 others:* The government should appoint a commission of top historians and archaeologists to find out the truth about monuments. Are the signatories of the said letter prepared to support his eminently reasonable suggestion?

*Afroz Alam Shaheen, New Delhi:* The enlightened group of historians has done the right thing by pointing out that the way you have tackled such a volatile issue on the front page of your newspaper and then entertained biased and communal correspondence in response to it does not render service to the nation.

*Mohinder Singh, New Delhi:* The historians, who belong to different communities but do not think in terms of communal identities, have done well by mentioning the hitherto little known fact that politi-

Indian masses that to seek a religion-free politics in India is to look for a politics unrelated to its social context. To my mind, therefore, the Indian variety of secularism cannot be established by denying the communal and caste reality. It needs to come to grips with the problem.

*Dr B. S. Sanyal, Varanasi:* Macaulayans such as Mr Adhikari with a glow of full literacy in their eyes, have had a long innings of lecturing the Hindus on secularism, the term being used not in the plain sense of equality before law irrespective of caste, creed and colour but in the sense of not mixing of politics with religion. They forget that this dictum is a part of their decadent culture, religion and ideology named liberal humanism, adam smithianism and capitalism. They also forget that politics of any kind of ideology is an integral part of the corresponding kind of religion or cultural system.

*Mr Rajendra Prasad Jain, Muzaffarnagar:* Mr Adhikari does not explain why the cutting of a problem is secular and why the breaking of coconut or lighting the lamps non-secular. Like every new religion it decries all the old religions and seeks to impose its own history, culture, rituals, language and literature.

*Madhav Prasad Agrawal, Rawat:* Why does Mr Adhikari want to impose an ideology most alien to us? He has looked only to European ideology and shut his eyes on India and the Indian people. He must know that the theory of Western secularism implies a 'hatred for religion', a negative approach, whereas Indian secularism is calls for 'respect for religion'. We should not be overawed by names like St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus and Ockhams. We Indians know nothing about them and it is better that Mr Adhikari keeps them in his own pocket. Please let us have our Nehru and Gandhi.

*A. K. Dogra, Jalandhar City:* It is very strange that Mr Gautam Adhikari is allergic even to coconut breaking and lighting of sacred lamps, and considers these as religious actions. Well, these actions are part of our national culture and our national heritage. Should we reject them because some minority groups do not like them?

*Ganesh Singh, Muzaffarnagar:* To say that to awake, arouse and organise the Hindus is unjustified because "their religion or existence is not threatened by Muslims" at present is to say that trying to build up one's health when there is no imminent fear of any disease is not justified. Awakening, consciousness and organisation are the signs of a healthy society. If the Hindus are attempting to attain that nobody should feel scared or envious of it.







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#### COMMUNAL TWIST

Letter to The Editor  
from Romila Thapar  
and 11 other historians  
(October 21)

*Mr Jayant Patel, New Delhi:* An unholy alliance between the government, the bureaucrats, the elite, the thinkers, the writers, the psychologists, the sociologists and the intellectuals such as these twelve signatories of the letter in question who by their anti-Hindu stance have done maximum harm to the cause of national unity and national integration.

*Mr S. A. Jacob, Mr Bijoy Chaliha and Mr J. P. Kumar, New Delhi:* Since independence this country's struggle to find its moorings has been hampered by various categories of "intellectuals" whose concern it has been throughout to establish their own "secular" image. At every step they have sought to decry any genuine endeavour aimed at strengthening India. In the Nehru era they did not spare even Jawaharlal Nehru when he tended to rouse a sense of pride in India's past. During Indira Gandhi's last years they sought to paint her as a Hindu communalist at heart just because she wanted to rouse people's awareness of their duties as Indians.

*Mr Sita Ram Goel, New Delhi:* The professors have come out at one go with a series of final pronouncements on many points touching upon India's history and culture. Readers are likely to infer that the evidence in support of their conclusions can be found in their own and allied writings. I am not exaggerating at all when I say that I have read almost all these books but am still looking for the evidence, particularly in support of their pet thesis that Hindus destroyed Buddhist and Jain temples. As regards the rest of their propositions, their writings contradict in one context what has been propounded in another.

*Ms Vimal Sharma and Ms Urvashi Dalal, Rohtak:* The report of September 15 on "Krishna's Birth Place After Aurangzeb" is a deliberate advocacy of unhistorical facts. In Aurangzeb's time the Keshva Dev Bundela Temple had become an asylum for conspiracies of the Jat rebels. The temple was always a constant source of trouble to the emperor as it was very close to the capital city Delhi. Had it been a general policy of Aurangzeb to demolish all the Hindu temples then why did he demolish only a few and granted, as it is proved by a recent firman from Mandu, revenue of some village for the maintenance of temple in Mandu?

*S. V. S. Iyer, Balkundrá (Bihar):* I fully endorse the views expressed by M/s. Romila Thapar and others. I think religious frenzy seems to be gripping us Indians and we are always on the look out for some weapon or other to strike followers of other faiths. If we wish to re-

out that the way you have tackled such a volatile issue on the front page of your newspaper and then entertained biased and communal correspondence in response to it does not render service to the nation.

*Mohinder Singh, New Delhi:* The historians, who belong to different communities but do not think in terms of communal identities, have done well by mentioning the hitherto little known fact that political and economic reasons have been the main motivating force behind various attacks on the Hindu temples. It will be too much of a generalisation to say that most of the Hindu temples and Sikh gurdwaras were demolished by Aurangzeb. While working on a project on the history of Gurdwara Sis-Ganj I came across an old letter in the Delhi State Archives which states that during the last days of Aurangzeb's rule some sort of monument in memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur had come up at the place where the Guru was beheaded. This means that even during the time of Aurangzeb new temples, both Hindu and Sikh, were being constructed. The Jain Temple in Chandni Chowk contains in its collection a land grant from the days of Aurangzeb giving them permission to build the temple there. There might be a number of other examples if one tries to carefully cull out such evidence from the old records. I think not only *The Times of India* but other leading newspapers in the country also have a positive role to play in the prevailing atmosphere surcharged with communal passions. Instead of playing with religious sentiments they need to act with caution in the interest of the country as a whole. The initiative taken by the country's top historians in putting matters straight needs support from all right-thinking people in the country.

#### SECULARISM AND HINDUISM

by Gautam Adhikari  
(October 18)

*Mr Nilotpal Mrinal, New Delhi:* The circumstances in which we became independent was not at all congenial for establishing a truly secular state. Even today, religion has such deep roots among the

groups do not like them!

*Ganesh Singh, Muzaffarnagar:* To say that to awake, arouse and organise the Hindus is unjustified because "their religion or existence is not threatened by Muslims" at present is to say that trying to build up one's health when there is no imminent fear of any disease is not justified. Awakening, consciousness and organisation are the signs of a healthy society. If the Hindus are attempting to attain that nobody should feel scared or grudge it.

*Mahindar Singh, New Delhi:* Hindu and Sikh communalism began only after the partition of India in 1947, when Hindus in Punjab mistakenly declared their mother tongue to be Hindi instead of Punjabi. I was most surprised when an educated Hindu visiting a gurdwara observed that seeing the marble slabs donated by devotees in memory of their dead, had inscriptions in Punjabi, Urdu or English language but not in Hindi. He did not realise that most donors, who were doubtless Sikhs, being cross with Hindus on the language issue, preferred a non-Hindi language for their slabs.

*Mr R. P. Singh, Delhi:* It is a pity that people who regard themselves the leaders of the intelligentsia should have talked of redressing past historical misdeeds committed by a handful of Muslim rulers. Their positive contribution to the social and cultural life of the country, architecture and music is of no account to this school of thinking... You will not easily admit it but taking advantage of the Sikh situation your editorial policy of late has swung in favour of Hindu communalists. Publication of letters critical of your editorials is no proof of secularism.

*Mr Ramchandra Gandhi, New Delhi:* It would be perfectly proper to think of India as a Hindu secular state or as an Adi secular state, which is not the same thing, be it noted, as a Hindu state or an Adivasi state... On an off-shore island equidistant from centres of world power let India set up a statue of Aditi, indivisible Mother of the Gods, massive and muscular in aboriginal conception, with an upturned arrow in one hand and a flute in the other, a gift of peace of the aboriginal civilisation of India to the future of life on earth.



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Between the lines

# Communalism: old fears and new dangers

by Kuldip Nayar

ON Sunday there was in all-India seminar on Causes of Communalism and Remedies in Allahgarh. Nearly four thousand young men and women, mostly Muslims, attended it. What some speakers said there may not be the thinking of the Muslims today. But it is reflective of a trend. And this is something for the nation, particularly the majority community, to ponder.

It is clear that the Muslims suffer from a deep sense of discrimination. They believe that they do not get employment because they are Muslims. They believe that the moment they get to do well in business, they are pounced upon by the majority community. What has happened in Bhiwandi, Ahmedabad, Jamshedpur, Allahgarh and Moradabad is linked with the efforts of Muslims to come up. They believe that they do not get even residential accommodation once a landlord comes to know that they are Muslims.

Their main grievance is against the police which they consider communal and out to make Muslims its target. They cite the examples of the Bihar Military Police in Jamshedpur and the Provincial Armed Constabulary in Moradabad to support their contention. They also have a grievance against political parties (particularly the Congress-I) which have left them where they are after making all types of promises.

I think most of these grievances are genuine. The Hindus in general and the ruling party in particular must seriously take note of them. Frustration has a way of finding an outlet in a most irresponsible manner at times. Mere slogans, as Mrs Gandhi rattled at her Congress party meeting in Delhi, cannot remove these grievances.

However, the worse part of the seminar was the speeches which

a few political leaders made. They spoke in the same irresponsible manner in which the Muslim League leaders did before the partition. They talked in terms of organising Muslims as Muslims; one of them even suggested a rebellion. I do not think that the gathering shared their thinking. But these kind of expressions can mislead young minds. Apparently, these leaders have no compunction in playing with the emotions of the Muslim youth.

In a situation where they do not get their due, the Muslims can be tempted to believe that their ends will be better served by organising themselves on religious lines — as a separate entity. Three speakers even revived the theory of two nations.

Little do the people who may be indulging in this kind of thinking realise that the Muslims, if organised on communal lines, will come to grief. If nothing else, the mere number of Hindus is enough to swamp them. A minority can always be countered by the majority if the confrontation is on communal lines.

The future of Muslims lies in strengthening secular forces. Those who believe that all Indians, whatever their religion, are equal citizens, and must have, as the constitution of India says, "equality of status and opportunity."

There was a persistent demand at the seminar for reservations in employment. This again is a remedy worse than the disease. Reservations in the Indian politics have a bad connotation; it reminds the nation of separate electorate and all that went with it to divide the two communities which lived as one family before the introduction of separate electorates nearly 60 years ago. Re-

servations also reflect helplessness, a hat-in-hand attitude which no self-respecting community should accept even if offered.

What emerged as a compromise at the seminar is probably the best solution in the circumstances. It was agreed that economic criterion should apply for reservations. It should not matter whether a person was Hindu, Muslim or a member of scheduled caste — if his income did not come up to a particular limit, he should be entitled to reservations in employment and other fields.

However, under Article 16, the state can make provision "for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the state, is not adequately represented in the services under the state." To be in with the police force should be "secularised." The government's move to create only a peace force, drawing men from all communities, can create complications. All police forces in the states should be composite and members of all communities should be represented on them.

Having said that I want to draw the attention of the majority community to the sullenness prevailing in the Muslim community. It is possible that their fears are exaggerated, and their claims are not realistic. But the point to note is that they increasingly feel insecure, economically and otherwise. And still more dangerous is the fact that when some among them talk of a separate entity or two-nation theory, they get a response.

It is true that India has two nations but they are the rich and the poor. Poverty knows no religion. Poor Muslims and poor Hindus have the same interest

and the rich among the two communities belong to the same establishment. The interests of the two classes are different and they live in their own worlds. The rich among Hindus and Muslims are making the poor Hindus and Muslims to fight among themselves. Communal riots have shown that the poor from the two communities have done the fighting. No rich Hindu or Muslim has died in these riots. In fact, even in the worse rioting, they have met socially.

And as one speaker said at the seminar, nowhere in the cities where communal riots have taken place has the labour force remained unaffected. In some cities Hindus were motivated by the desire to get more opportunities by driving out Muslims. In many factories temporary Hindu hands got confirmed when the Muslim employees were made to leave. No trade union has ever taken up their case; no labour leader has ever raised any voice in their support.

In the absence of assertion by the right quarters, it looks the Muslims have begun to have a feeling as if they are being driven to the wall. As days go by, in desperation they are thinking of remedies which will be suicidal for them. Communal leaders and newspapers are taking an advantage of their frustrations. The Hindus, as a majority community have a responsibility to retrieve them. But they are still carrying on the fight between Aurangzeb and Shivaji. And some of them have not shed their prejudice against the Muslims. In fact many among them preach and practise communalism blatantly.

Probably, a proper educational programme will inculcate secular thinking among Hindus and Muslims. They must give up communal attitudes. If they did not do so, some other Jinnah may be born. After all, he was a product of circumstances.



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# Communalism and National Integration—I

## A Framework of Analysis

PRAMOD KUMAR

BHUPINDER YADAV

The extent and scope of the threat to national integration posed by communalism has long been a subject of concern and debate in the country. The Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh, recently commissioned two of its Research Fellows to study the impact of communalism on national integration, along with the consequences for the present and the future. *Mainstream* publishes below the first part of the "framework of analysis" offered by the two-member CRRID team. The remaining parts will be carried in the next two issues of *Mainstream*. Readers of *Mainstream* are invited to offer their responses to the formulations herein.

—Editor

COMMUNALISM is a pertinent reminder of the complexities of religion, caste, ethnicity, and the intractable political and economic problems often involved in them. It has taken diverse forms over time, with contextual variations manifesting in demands for incremental concessions, communal rioting, secessionist demands, etc. Thirtyseven years since Independence have witnessed about ten thousand communal riots. These riots have taken a toll of thousands of human lives and contributed to the process of degeneration of human values. It has impeded the nascent process of development of scientific temper and secularism.

It is not merely the increase in the recurrence of communal rioting and use of communalism in politics but the increasing social appeal of communalism which demands rigorous research.

We have spoken, in our homes, ill or well of 'Baniya District Commissioners', 'Jat Vice-Chancellors' or 'Brahmin General'. Would these designations not be better without the prefixes we attach to them? Do these references not carry covert communalism? Why then should we blame rioters who only express their delicate intimate thoughts in crude physical violence? Such is our communalism. Fight against the communalism has to begin in our own minds and homes.

Communalism winks at atrocities, looting, killings of 'decent' men would hesitate to commit under another name. Irresponsible acts of heaping guilt on innocent people for avenging brutalities committed by communalists is like sowing a seed and reaping a whirlwind. Why are some of us celebrating indecencies of life? Why are we celebrating killings and assassinations?

Communal riots in Delhi in early November 1984 can hardly be dismissed as vandalism of "Gujjars" or "Gujji-dwellers" to avenge their deprivations. These riots cannot be termed conflicts to avenge

economic injustices *per se*. Participation in such riots may be the result of economic injustices but the target is misplaced. The discontentment may be the result of scarce resources, distributive injustices, and not because one "community" is competing against another for its own betterment or others' detriment. However, communal propaganda by communal, religious or political leaders seeks to give a colour to this struggle between classes as one between "communities".

Political parties, social and religious organisations and Government machinery have used and perpetuated communalism. Therefore, expectations for protection from arsonists and rioters should not revolve around them. Non-functioning of democratic institutions and frequent misuse of military to resolve politico-economic problems is dangerous. Public opinion should be aroused and we must demand a functioning and participatory democracy and a political solution to these problems. Otherwise people may lose faith in democratic values and institutions.

Communal violence is frequently abetted, instigated by vested interests. Instigators of such violence derive their antagonism from a clash of economic or political interests and successions impart to the clash a communal tinge. Inherent conflicts and contradictions are sharpened so as to cause antagonism between big well-entrenched leaders and the new entrants over non-expanding economic opportunities. The examples of this are the antagonism between big well-entrenched traders/manufacturers from among Alvi Bohras and newly emerging merchant-manufacturers from among Patels in optical industry in Vadodra, between Hindu and Muslim exporters of brass-ware in Moradabad, between Marwari, Gujarati and Ansari powerloom owners in Bhiwandi, etc.

In situations where religious group identities over-



lap with class distinctions, it is possible for competition (particularly when fierce) to be fought on communal lines. There is also a large majority of sympathisers who may justify communal violence but not participate in it. The participants and sympathisers of communal violence are essentially victims of communal ideology. They mostly fear their religious or caste group "identities" are being subsumed or effaced by their antagonist groups. The propagators of communal ideology play on the fears and apprehensions of their respective co-religionists, so as to gain in electoral politics. The perspective to combat communalism, therefore, has to take note of its causation, dimensions, manifestations and consequences. So the questions to be posed are: (1) What is communalism? (2) Where from does it stem and why? (3) Why does it persist? (4) What are its various dimensions, manifestations and consequences?

THE attempt here is to define communalism with a regular perspective in a scientific way. The following five meanings of communalism have been discussed and refuted: (a) Communalism is caused by religious differences. (b) Communalism is discrimination on the basis of religion. (c) Communalism of one group is a backlash of another. (d) Communalism is merely communal rioting. (e) Communalism is rooted in pre-capitalist structures.

In the second part communalism has been defined and its various dimensions and manifestations have been identified. It has been argued that communalism is an ideology and the present-day communalism is a modern phenomenon. The bearing of religion on communalism has been explored. Communal politics is identified to be the greatest consumer and propagator of communal ideology. The persistence of communalism has been explained with reference to its social appeal amongst various sections, strata and classes. The dimensions of communalism identified here are: (a) Communalism — Conformist. (b) Communalism — Conformist-Incremental. (c) Communalism — Secessionist.

From amongst the above three categories, the dominant form of communalism will influence the extent of communalisation in a given space and time. These three dimensions of communalism may, however, coexist and reinforce each other.

It has been indicated that communalism has been used to weaken organised labour movements and thereby curb the democratic freedom of workers. Communalism also perpetuates the ascriptive division of labour by restricting the formation of skills to particular caste or religious groups. Communalism approves and strengthens clustered living of one caste/religious group together with all its attendant evils. Clusters make their residents psychologically claustrophobic and create a visual impact of being an organised threat to the antagonistic religious or communal groups. The evils of clusters can be outlined as under:

(a) Uneven, lop-sided and slow development is interwoven with a situation where a particular religious group is clustered and nurses a deep-rooted

persecution complex. This religious group perceives an immediate link between its deprivations and under-development of its area. This perception provides a leverage to vested interests to use some of the human miseries and other political and social deprivations to reinforce the elements of communalism.

(b) It also delimits social interaction, exposure to diversities of culture, etc. This builds up an inward-looking attitude and in the process makes people less mobile to avail opportunities outside their group.

(c) In the event of a cluster formation, the number and power of the group, perceived to be antagonistic appears menacingly exaggerated.

(d) Cluster formations provide fertile ground for the cementing and strengthening communal loyalties which may be used by communal organisations to spread communalism.

Extreme communalism may lead to theocracy and fascism. Communal propaganda arouses expectations on communal lines. Communal expectations, roused by vested interests, have serious repercussions on the functioning of the democratic system. Victims of communal ideology, spurred by the non-realisation of their communal demands, seek alternatives in the form of reactionary solutions such as "Khalistan", "Hindu Rashtra" or "Darul Islam". Among dangerous consequences of communalism is its potential of leading to disintegration of the country. Secessionists and external forces can use communal violence to destabilise the Indian state. The attempts may have a limited impact, but can become dangerous in a communally charged environment in which reason is subordinated to emotion. This can happen particularly when communal identities are perceived by a religious group to be synonymous with the right to self-determination. Minority communalism may lead to theocracy via secession, whereas majority communalism may directly lead to proto-type of fascism. Communalism as such, irrespective of its basis in minority or majority religion, is retrogressive.

Errors of perception and conception have inevitably led to wrong understanding of communalism. Piece-meal solutions to communalism have perpetuated and aggravated the problem. A frontal attack on communal ideology accompanied by consistent ideological and political struggle for the spread of Marxism and class consciousness is the need of the hour.

Communalism is retrogressive but understanding this phenomenon through the communal prism is less retrogressive. Identification of the causes of the existence or persistence of any social phenomenon provides a necessary insight towards solutions.

IT IS widely believed that communalism is caused by differences in religious practices. Communalism is also understood to be a result of discrimination on religious group basis. This belief leads to conclusion that solution to communalism lies in tolerance of different faiths. Or in the elimination of all religions or physical extermination/deportation of the adherents of different religions. Or protection in jobs and legislatures or 'magnanimity



only minority religious group towards the safe-  
guarding of its interests by communalists on behalf of  
the majority. To propagate all this is to accept the  
problem as a communalism. Any analysis of or  
solution to the problem made on these premises  
will be bound to be communal.

Differences in religious practices do exist and are  
real. But so is the colour difference between the  
Blacks and the Whites. And this difference is not  
the cause of racialism. Similarly, the religion of the  
Jews is sharply different from that of the Christians.  
But this difference did not cause anti-Semitism in  
Germany in the nineteenth century. The mere exist-  
ence of diverse religious practices does not cause  
communalism. Differing religious practices leading to  
provocations such as playing music before mosques,  
slaughtering of cows, throwing coloured water  
during Holi and issues like conversions, reservations,  
etc., may spark communal rioting. But these inci-  
dents are only pretexts for blurring secular social,  
economic and political needs, expectations and  
conflicts.

Communalism, in fact, is anti-religion. What  
communalism projects to be in the interest of a  
particular religious group is not merely false, but  
on the contrary it uses religion as a vehicle to pro-  
tect or promote some interests other than those it  
claims to be serving. For instance, workers,  
labourers, artisans have nothing in common with  
landlords, industrialists, traders, bureaucrats of their  
own religious group except their religion. Therefore,  
discrimination can not be against the whole religious  
group. One can understand discrimination on  
communal lines by an individual. This discrimi-  
nation is a consequence of communalism practised  
by individuals.

The trend of Swamis-Shankaracharyas, Mullas-  
Maulvis, Gianis-Granthis, etc.—to speak on behalf  
of their religious groups reflects the belief that  
communalism is caused by religious differences.  
These religious leaders unwittingly provide legiti-  
macy to communalists. Whereas the communalists,  
whilst appearing to serve the interests of the whole  
religious group, are merely using religion in the  
social, economic and political spheres for self-  
aggrandisement.

THE ABOVE understanding of treating communal-  
ism to be the outcome of conflicting religious prac-  
tices and discriminations on religious basis, has the  
following implications:

1. It implies that religious groups are homogeneous  
in nature and the members of a religious group have  
common socio-economic and political interests which  
bind them together. This assumes that there exist  
separate socio-cultural, economic and political  
interests of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims and that  
these are dissimilar and divergent.

2. Communalism is the protection of interests of  
one religious group at the cost of another.

3. It assumes that interests are articulated in  
politics on religious group lines, that is, religion  
serves as the basis of popular political participation.  
It implies that in an election the followers of a par-  
ticular religion are bound to vote for their co-reli-

gionists and candidates so elected shall work only  
in the interest of and only for all their co-religion-  
ists.

4. It also implies the historical inevitability of the  
phenomenon of communalism. So long as there  
are plurality of religions and differences in religious  
practices, communalism is bound to be pervasive.

Let us take the first assumption that religious  
groups are homogeneous and have common secular  
interests. It is very difficult to accept such an as-  
sumption when members of a religious group pursue  
different occupations and have dissimilar socio-  
economic backgrounds. "I wonder as to where is  
the Hindu-Muslim problem in reality. Whether  
Hindus or Muslims, poverty, unemployment and  
other hardships affect them alike; and therefore it is  
nothing but playing a fraud with the country conti-  
nuously to harp on the so-called Hindu-Muslim"  
A labourer (Hindu) on being out-competed by an-  
other labourer (a Muslim) in the job market, identifies  
the cause of this deprivation, unemployment and  
misery on the basis of religious group identities. The  
retention of religious groups as a reference point due  
to the pervasiveness of communal ideology, provides  
a convenient scapegoat to the depressed groups  
for their sufferings. It is a result of this mystifica-  
tion of reality that a worker (Muslim) employed in  
the factory owned by his co-religionist feels more  
secure and better off than his co-workers belonging  
to other religious groups. His perceived identifica-  
tion with his employer is as false as his difference  
with his co-workers. The reality is that these workers  
have nothing in common with their employers.  
This is not to deny that the members of one religious  
group have similar religious interests. But com-  
munalists use this alone and project that secular  
interests are also based on religion and hence all the  
interests of members of different religious groups are  
dissimilar, divergent and antagonistic.

This kind of communal propaganda distorts the  
real issues and misrepresents the real interests. For  
instance, the demand for water and the language  
question were projected as 'Sikh' or 'Hindu' prob-  
lems. Is sufficient water not equally the need of the  
peasants in both Punjab and Haryana? Should they  
not jointly demand more water from the Govern-  
ment? Today peasant in Punjab believes that his  
interests are antagonistic to those of a peasant in  
Haryana because he belongs to a different religious  
group. For this communal politics is to be blamed.  
Similarly, non-enumeration of Punjabi as mother-  
tongue by a section of Punjabi Hindus, in the  
Census, has proved detrimental to the development  
of their own culture and language. Again, communal  
politics has mystified reality. The need is to attack  
the forces exploiting communalism, political parties  
using communalism, rather than individuals who are  
merely the victims of communal ideology.

Using categories such as "Hindu interests",  
"Muslim interests", "Sikh interests" and so on to  
dissect social reality is to analyse the problem with-  
in the communal framework. The repeated asser-  
tion regarding the existence of such interests by  
communalists and vested interests has even distorted  
the perception of some of the analysts and policy



makers. To quote Bipan Chandra:

"The very tools of analysis have been contaminated by it (communalism) as a result of the ideological conditioning of the last 100 years, when the middle classes and the intelligentsia were perceptually surrounded by a communal outlook in politics, in the press, in literature and particularly, in the educational system. Consequently, communalism has often been viewed in the social sciences, as in real life, through conscious or unconscious communal assumptions. For example if one's analysis starts by accepting the communal leaders as leaders and representatives of their 'communities' — and if one refers to the Hindu, Muslim or Sikh communalists as Hindu leaders, Muslim leaders, or Sikh leaders — or if one accepts that communal political activity is the political activity of their 'communities', one is already accepting the basic communal framework of thought and analysis. On the other hand, if no communal economic, political and social interests exist, the communalists cannot be representing such interests and are not therefore representatives of their 'communities'."

The use of communal categories to understand and unfold social reality leads to mistaking the symptoms for causes. Remedies are then prescribed to eradicate the symptoms. The result is that the problem persists while the symptoms may disappear. To understand and counter communalism it is no doubt necessary to recognise the religious factor as an important component, but it will be hazardous to accept the notion of Hindu interest, Muslim interest or Sikh interest and so on. Once this notion is rejected, there shall be no question about secular needs, aspirations and expectations of different religious groups being divergent and dissimilar.

Secondly, to say that communalism is the protection of the interests of one religious group at the cost of another religious group is misleading. Communalism does not and cannot protect the interests of one religious group at the cost of another. It is only a few individuals who benefit from communalism and such examples become a handy tool in the hands of communalists to mobilise support. For instance, if a job goes to a Sikh applicant, a communal Hindu considers it favouritism, and if it goes to a Hindu applicant, a Sikh communalist perceives it as discrimination against his entire religious group. No one can argue that there is absolutely no discrimination on religious, caste or regional lines in our society. But this happens due to the communal approach of individual agents of state.

Therefore, any policy of appeasing communalism or giving concessions to a religious group — be it a majority or a minority — is doomed to failure. Concessions sought or demands raised on communal lines will not eliminate but rather strengthen communalism. For instance, a demand that since Hardwar enjoys a holy city status, the same should be granted to Amritsar, is nothing but asking for concessions for the communalist. Instead, Hardwar should also be stripped of its Government-sponsored holiness. Further, it should also be demanded that the Government should repeal the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee Act, Devasthan and Waqf Board Acts, so that the Government may not become a party to the promotion of any religious activity. Religious heads should exercise their moral authority to administer the affairs of their respective religions.

Further to say that communalism of the majority

should concede special privileges to communalism of the minorities is also counter-productive. This proposition is not feasible as communalism revolves around fears, not generosity. In addition, this proposition accepts the existence of majority and minority interests which is a mirage.

Thirdly, to argue that religion or such categories serve as the basis of popular political participation is to imply that people are voting primarily on religious considerations, and the representatives elected would be detrimental to religious groups other than their own.

A statistical study of votes secured by the communal parties clearly shows that votes are not on communal lines. For example, the highest percentage of the votes secured by the Akali Dal Punjab was almost 31.43 in 1977. In other words Punjab has only once secured almost 50 per cent of the vote among Sikhs. Similarly, the Jana Sangh vote in Punjab-Haryana-Kangra belt could reach 9.5 per cent in 1962. In the linguistically reorganised Punjab, Jana Sangh secured 9.85 per cent in 1967 which represents 25 per cent of the vote among Hindus. The results of the elections clearly indicate that parties propagating communal ideologies were not taken seriously by the majority of voters.

The persistence of communal politics no doubt influences voting behaviour of some sections of Indian population. It is precisely because of reason that some individuals belonging to minority religious group perceive democracy as rule of the majority religious group. The state is ruled by capital, not by religious or groups.

If the Indian state was a communal capitalist it would have granted the right to earn profits to 'Banias', 'Marwaris' and so on. Perhaps it is not visualising the danger inherent in the use of categorisation. Similarly the notion that 'Hindu Bania State' is secular only in name, being ruled by Hindus who happen to be in majority, would only fructify into a proto-type of Communal Hindus accept this and project themselves to be the custodians of Indian nationhood. This notion strengthens the belief that minorities, Muslims or Sikhs, can never hope to come to power. Repeated assertions of the danger to the existence of the 'Hindu identity', 'Muslim identity' or 'Sikh identity' contribute to the formation of fascist gangs. These gangs generate an atmosphere of violence as well as use of physical force against individuals perceived to be posing a threat to such 'identities'. We are only one step away from fascism. Fascism in Germany first chose its target of attack and promised social extermination of them for being usurpers. Communism has also chosen its targets.

Like fascism, communalism also appeals to the genuine demands of the people and process identify displaced targets in the process of identification of demands so raised. For the anti-capitalist policy of the fascists, Jewish usurers or bankers and the petty merchants to be the exploiters.

"Socialism", Jacobells wrote, "can be



only in opposition to the Jews, and it is because we want socialism that we are anti-Semitic".<sup>8</sup> "Anti-Semitism, which began as a racial prejudice exploited as a demagogic trick, ended in the most abominable genocide of all time."<sup>9</sup> The continuous propagation by the communal groups, which has been their main plank of electoral mobilisation, is that "religious communities" have divergent and dissimilar interests. It arouses expectations for the fulfilment of secular needs and reinforces the belief that a particular religious group is being discriminated against. The present system is not geared to benefit one or the other 'community'. Hence demands raised along communal lines cannot benefit 'communities' as a whole but may only benefit individuals within them.

There is a possibility that the non-realisation of the needs (falsely projected and believed to be of the whole 'community') may boomerang on the propagators of communal demands. Recent developments in Punjab illustrates the isolation of incremental communalists, like Akali Dal and Jana Sangh. Akali Dal lost credibility for failing to protect the so-called "Sikh interests", for example, rivers waters, territorial demands, Vatican status for Amritsar, deletion of Article 25, etc. Jana Sangh has equally lost face due to its continuous inability in protecting the so-called "Hindu interests". The ground lost by these incremental communalists has apparently been won by individuals/groups projecting themselves as extreme communalists.

Victims of communal ideology spurred by the non-realisation of their demands articulated on communal lines have started seeking reactionary solutions in ideas like 'Khalistan', 'Hindu Rashtra', etc. Such extreme communalism tends to actively fan the atmosphere of hatred, communal tension and violence. Therefore communalism or such ideologies can not favour one religious group or the other. They are not only anti-democratic but also anti-human.

Another aspect of communal politics is related to the alliances by communal groups for capturing political power. For example, four Akali-Jana Sangh coalitions in Punjab were founded on the "communal arithmetic", that is, Akalis represented "Sikh interests" and Jana Sangh represented "Hindu interests". These coalitions floundered due to the fact that the social constituency of the Akali Dal and the Jana Sangh were quite distinct — the Akalis could muster the support of some peasants and traders whereas the Sanghis had a section of traders, merchant-manufacturers and people in white-collar jobs behind them. The coalitions were a marriage under expedient circumstances for "leadership", while the ranks of these "leaders", among whom were the victims of communal ideology, held each other in deep suspicion and distrust. Political groupings or alliances based on communal expectations cannot therefore last long.

Fourthly, the assumption that the very existence of religions would make communalism inevitable is false. Communalism, unlike class consciousness or fight against imperialism, is not based on any real conflict of the society. Rather it is based on the

myth of common non-religious interests of a particular religious group. Present-day communalism which is a modern ideology uses religion as an instrument to fulfil other interests and will persist even if religious group identities are abolished. Only its form will change, caste or any other retrogressive category may replace religion. Communalism, therefore, is based on religious differences but religion is not the cause of communalism.

COMMUNALISM of one group is not born as a result of the communalism of another. To say that Hindu communalism is a backlash of Muslim or Sikh communalism is utterly false. It is rather communalism of one group that feeds and inflates that of another.<sup>10</sup>

(1) Firstly, the communalists project individual gains of persons belonging to the other religious group to be those of the whole "community".

(2) Secondly, they exaggerate the gains so projected.

Thirdly, they pose the gains so exaggerated to be the loss of their co-religionists.

(4) Fourthly, the rival communalists accept individual gains to have benefited the other "community" and a circular battle ensues between communalists.

For example, if the Vice-Chancellorship of a University is secured by an individual who happens to be a Hindu, the communalists will project it to be a gain of all 'Hindus' and as a loss to other religious groups. Recent events in contemporary history show how dangerous this approach is. Sikh communalists bullied innocent members of the Hindu religious group for disowning Punjabi language and Hindu communalists harassed innocent believers of Sikhism outside Punjab, for the same communalists repeatedly propagated that Hindi was the language of the Hindus and Punjabi of the Sikhs. The pro-Hindi section viewed the demand for linguistic demarcation of Punjab by Sikh communalists to be an attempt to create theocratic state. Some of the Sikh communalists owned this. And this in turn hardened communal attitudes and transformed demagoguery into a grave crisis. The net outcome of this confrontation was a firing up between the two communalist groups at the cost of several innocent lives. Similarly, the vicious agitation for minority character for Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) sharpened communal cleavages. The accrual of minority status, it was projected, would benefit all 'Muslims' and deprive all 'Hindus' of an opportunity for higher education. This issue rocked Aligarh several times with intense rioting. Communal propaganda on this issue was fuelled by the emerging middle classes of Aligarh, from both Hindu and Muslim religious groups. The implication of such an understanding will be to pose one communalism against another.

COMMUNALISM cannot be termed synonymous with communal rioting. Communal riots are one of the conjunctural manifestations of communalism. Those who think communalism is communal rioting conclude that this problem can be tackled



by reinforcing the law and order machinery. This approach does not take into consideration the role of communal ideology in generating riots. For example, the inquiry commissions appointed by the Government of India to go into the causes of various communal riots approached this problem with the methodology which normally is adopted to study ordinary crimes. The implicit assumption is that a communal riot is nothing but physical violence resorted to by a conglomeration of individuals. It was considered just like any other sporadic violent incident. The common tendency is to become hysterical when conflicts take a violent turn. Though private discussions have often revolved around "Rajput" Deputy Commissioner, "Mina" Police Commissioner or "Brahmin" political leader, when such drawing-room talk gets concretised into frenzy in the streets, the remedy is sought in the use of coercive state apparatus. Communal rioting cannot be understood in isolation from the comprehension of the level and operation of communal ideology. The notion that communal riots have their own logic and can be combated independently of the various complex of processes unleashed by the changing socio-economic formations is not only partial but rather is counter-productive. Communal rioting as a conjunctural outcome of the pervasiveness of communal ideology has to be understood in terms of the linkages of communal ideology, communal politics and communal violence.

It would be too simplistic to state that communalism, communal ideology and communal violence are rooted in the pre-capitalist structures. Further, it would be too sweeping an implication to draw that since it is rooted in the pre-capitalist development, so the capitalist path of development would automatically subsume such retrogressive tendencies. This reasoning would make us vulnerable to economic determinism. It ignores the mediations which give a particular form and shape to conflicts and subsequently mystify the real conflicts of society. Therefore, while dealing with communal conflicts, sufficient emphasis must be laid on conditions that cause the persistence of communal ideology and increase the intensity and frequency of communal rioting.

It was assumed that there is a mechanical relationship between communalism and industrialisation. Industrialisation was expected to automatically equip people with a scientific and rational outlook. Industrialisation, on the contrary, has brought certain structural changes which have an uneven impact on different groups. These changes in a situation of pervasiveness of communal ideology led to the identification of the sources of deprivation on communal lines.

Further, the persistence of communalism cannot merely be ascribed to conceptual error on the part of decision-makers. Rather it may also be because of lack of political will to make a subjective intervention to combat such retrogressive tendencies and to inject scientific temper and secular values. Wrong diagnosis has resulted in faulty prescription. A comprehensive framework is required for understanding

the phenomenon of communal in its totality. The framework has to reflect upon the inter-linkages and inter-relationships between communal ideology, communal politics and communal violence. Otherwise, there is a danger that piecemeal studies would lead to vulgar empiricism and new determinants of communalism would be discovered every time communal tension develops or a communal incident occurs. (To be continued)

#### NOTES

1. "Honest Communalism is fear, false communalism is political reaction". — Jawaharlal Nehru (1933); *Selected Works* Vol. 6, p. 164.

2. "In order to solve it the majority community must show generosity in the matter to allay the fear and suspicion that minorities, even though unreasonable, might have. That analysis is, I think, perfectly sound." — Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 190.

"In particular, it was the Hindu Middle classes which had to show a certain magnanimity..." — Bipan Chandra (1984), *Communalism in Modern India*, p. 140.

3. There are many authors who assume that communal interests and structural "communities" based on religion do exist. Some of them are: Prabhu Dixit (1974), *Communalism—A Struggle for Power*; Mushirul Hasan (1979), *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1916-28*; Rasheeduddin Khan (1970) "The Development of Muslim National Consciousness in India: A Political Analysis", mimeographed, presented at the Seminar on "The Communal Problem in India 1919-47" organised by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

4. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 207.

5. Bipan Chandra (1984), *op. cit.*, pp 10-13.

6. Like S. Gopal we are also in disagreement with Bipan Chandra when he observes, "Herein lay the special responsibility of the majority. The best remedy in such a situation was for the majority to give proof by word and deed that it was for the minority and its mistrust of the majority were groundless... But then the Hindu middle classes, especially in the North also imbued with communalism, they resisted, often in an only showed little magnanimity, they resisted, often in an organised way, all efforts of the nationalist leadership to give timely concessions to the Muslim middle classes so as to get rid of their mistrust, fears and insecurity". — Bipan Chandra (1984), *op. cit.*, pp 140-141.

S. Gopal opines: "...He (Nehru) always, like Gandhi took the line that it was for the Hindus, as the majority community, to make concessions while the communal problem lasted. This in itself, despite the call to magnanimity, assumes a communal approach, however sub-conscious. The argument is based on the belief that the majority community is a privileged one, and the minority community has reason to be communal. It was true that Jawaharlal had not carefully probed this issue, and was irritated by Mahatma's criticisms of Gandhi and the Congress and open wooing of the Government. Not even so the implication that there was something to choose between Hindu and Muslim communalism was dangerous in its possibilities." — S. Gopal (1975), *Jawaharlal Nehru — A Biography*, Vol. 1, p. 183.

7. This argument has been taken from a book: *India in Crisis: Context and Trends* (1984), pp 70-71.

8. Goebbels (1931) *Der Nazi-Sozi* Quoted from Dan Cserin (1972) *Fascism and Big Business*, pp 80-81.

9. *Ibid.*, p 31.

10. Bipan Chandra (1984) *op. cit.* p. 220.

Shaukat Ali declared in 1929 "Hindus have been labouring under slavery and they would remain slaves." The Hindu nationalists accepted that Hindus were slaves "under Muslim rule". For example, in 1937, V.D. Savarkar described the rule of Muslim rulers as "a veritable death warrant to the Hindu nation".



16-5-87

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**Communalism 'a false  
consciousness'**

By A Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, May 15.

**P**ROF. BIPAN CHANDRA, historian, said yesterday that communalism, which had dominated political life in this country for several decades, could be tackled only if the social order was changed.

Speaking on "Social roots of communalism in modern India" under the auspices of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Prof. Chandra said that communalism had been used

by persons of lower and middle classes as a struggle for jobs and economic opportunity. It was a tool in the hands of the middle class and the petty bourgeoisie for improving their economic condition.

Tracing the growth of communalism during the colonial rule and the independence struggle, Prof. Chandra said it had been employed by politicians for keeping their hold on the lower and middle classes. It had also been used for perpetuating the various "dissimilar and divergent interests" between Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians.

He said: "Communalism is a modern ideology and its social roots are not in the past. The use of the word Community in respect of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Christians is totally misplaced. It would be better to use the word Hindu or Muslim as the case may be."

It was also a "false consciousness" and was not a partial view of reality but a false view of reality. The concept of communalism spread and developed because of various social and economic conditions obtaining in the pre-1947 India.

**COMPETITION FOR JOBS**

Prof. Chandra said the economic stagnation and the colonial character of Indian economy in the thirties and forties led to competition for jobs in government service between different classes of people. This struggle in its turn led to rise in nepotism, corruption and bribery.

Gradually, he said, communalism got "official recognition" as people belonging to different communities sought job reservations and various other concessions for themselves.

Prof. Chandra said that communalism was the "inherent weakness" of the national movement. But despite this the leaders of the Congress and other political parties were not able to curb it as the lower and middle classes—who formed the base of the national movement—were deeply involved in it.

He also blamed the left-wing parties of not making a "conscious struggle" against communalism. These parties were also keen to retain their political hold over the lower middle class and weaker sections of the community.



THE

At the Hindustan Limited (H.A.L.) Lucknow, the Muslims have been holding prayer in the afternoon for some of the Hindu workers demanding the same. There is tension in the organisation which has a communal divide by it.

What is happening in the plant is a symptom of a disease. An atmosphere of tension is building up and the community has begun to rediscover its roots and common nightmares of partition are again arraying themselves against one another.

The situation has much but devotees of major temples in Mathura, which have common walls with mosques, no trouble (not bloody communal fights), are allowing accommodation to the Babri Masjid. The mabhooni complex illustrates the separation.

#### DYING SPIRIT

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# THE RISE OF COMMUNALISM

At the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (H.A.L.) plant in Lucknow, the Muslim employees have been holding prayer meetings in the afternoon for years. Now some of the Hindu employees are demanding the same "facility". There is tension in the air and the organisation which had never seen a communal divide is now afflicted by it.

What is happening at the H.A.L. plant is a symptom of a widespread disease. An atmosphere of intolerance is building up in the country and the communities which had begun to rediscover their common roots and common culture after the nightmare of partition are once again arraying themselves against one another.

The situation has worsened so much that devotees visiting two major temples in Varanasi and Mathura, which have shared common walls with mosques and seen no trouble (not even during the bloody communal clashes in the forties), are allowing their spirit of accommodation to fade and die. The Babri Mosque-Rama Janmabhoomi complex dispute illustrates the separatist phenomenon.

## DYING SPIRIT

The tragedy of the Babri Mosque issue does not lie in the unlocking of its doors but in the assertiveness with which Hindus have said goodbye to the spirit of tolerance. A way could have been found to ensure that Hindus had full access to the Rama Janmabhoomi site and Muslims had the freedom to visit the 500-year-old spot of the mosque. After all, this was the manner in which the two religious structures existed in British days.

But the spirit of catholicity, which is the hallmark of Hinduism, has become weak. The feeling that majority rule is the only thing that counts these days has impaired the idea of give-and-take. No longer do the people belonging to one community feel that it is their duty as civilised human beings to ensure that the susceptibilities of the members of other communities are not hurt.

In Gujarat it was the provocation from Hindu processionists in Kakinada, a Muslim locality in Ahmedabad, that provided the spark to ignite the haystack of hatred the hooligans of the two communities and accumulated.

Slogans should have been countered only by slogans. There can be no justification for retaliation with stones, arson-causing missiles and guns. But the communalists do not belong to one religion. The question to be asked is this: when did the State Government receive a warning to the effect that violence might break out if the rath yatra passed that way? The officials who allowed the procession to take the dangerous route did not act wisely.

Gujarat may probably be the worst example, but all over the country Hindus are forsaking secularism and taking to communalism. There was a time when one

felt proud if one was called a liberal, but now many Hindus want to be described as fundamentalists. And the way the question, "Is it a sin to be a Hindu?", is being asked all over the country gives the impression that secularism is only skin-deep in India. Does it mean the birth of a new Hindu cult? In a way it does. And it is the cult of hatred.

## CULT OF HATRED

What has caused such damaging change? The view that a Hindu is a mild-mannered and non-violent person has been proved wrong again and again. Three Muslims were burnt alive in Ahmedabad and members of a Muslim family were similarly killed in Bhiwandi, near Bombay, last year.

Seven years ago, 30 Muslims were burnt in an ambulance in Jamshedpur; and in 1984 a number of Sikhs were killed in the riots that followed Indira Gandhi's assassination.

It is no use harping on the consequences of partition because despite its fallout India opted for a secular polity. Not only that. The Constitution framed after Independence assured the religious minorities that the law of the land would not let them be discriminated against. The statute book gave

Indeed, communalism has more destructive strength now than it had ever before. A clear proof of this can be found in Ahmedabad where even the textile unions nurtured in the Gandhian tradition responded to a bandh call given by communal and sectarian leaders.

No trade union in the country has gone on strike to protest against unemployment or hunger!

The new law concerning the grant of maintenance allowance to divorced Muslim women is said to have vitiated the atmosphere. But how does this law affect the Hindus (however "unfair" it may be to Muslim women)? There is no doubt that Muslim fundamentalists exploited the situation obtaining after the Supreme Court verdict in the Shah Bano case, but Hindus only strengthened their hands by their over-reaction.

In the name of challenging the Act in a court of law such people have created a situation in which the right and wrong aspects of the Act are being mixed up. The fundamentalists have come to the fore!

It appears that the Punjab situation, which has vitiated the socio-political debate in the country, over the past four years, has affected the Hindu psyche. The majority community has developed

aspect of the Punjab problem is the communal contamination which has made the most vital arm of the law weak.

The induction of members of such communities as are not represented in the police force will also help. One-third of a State's police force should be recruited from outside as is being done in choosing men for the all-India services and selecting judges for the High Courts. This step will make local and communal pulls ineffective.

It has been proved again and again that rath yatras create tension even if they do not end up in communal riots. So it is surprising that no one has drawn the right lessons from what has happened in U.P., Bihar, M.P. and Rajasthan. And what about the recent happenings in Gujarat? Rath yatras should either be banned or not allowed to pass through the localities which are inhabited mainly by Muslims. Loudspeakers placed outside temples, mosques and gurdwaras also cause tension.

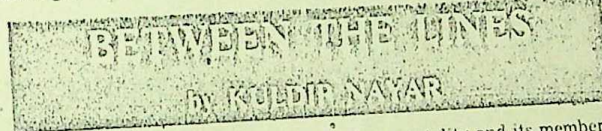
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However, the Government's attitude towards communalism betrays complacency. When the Lok Sabha began a discussion on communalism the other day, no Cabinet Minister was present in the House. Only Mr P. Chidambaram, who wears many hats these days (even without having a Cabinet Minister's rank) was seen taking copious notes. His experience of communal rioting is based on a one-day visit to Ahmedabad.

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The point which all Hindus must give a serious thought to is whether they still have faith in secularism, a principle which free India adopted several years ago.

Before Independence, the Congressmen did not allow such propaganda as the Muslim League had brought into its separatist campaign to pollute the climate of opinion in the party.

The policy of keeping religion and politics apart was generally adhered to and Hindu-Muslim unity remained a matter of commitment for all Congressmen.

It is a tragedy that in less than four decades the ideals the country had fought for have got diluted because of the rise of aggressive "fundamentalism" in various communities which are closely linked with one another — both socially and culturally.

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T.V. serials and other items projecting the Hindu viewpoint, which Information Minister V.N. Gadgil has introduced with the zeal of an evangelist, indicate that the official media's purpose is to project Hinduism. When Mr Rajiv Gandhi and his wife, Sonia, were shown worshipping the Ganga on television I was told by an official that the programme was being put out to remove the prejudice existing among certain sections of the Hindus against Mrs Sonia Gandhi who was born in a Roman Catholic family.

## SECULARISM

An immediate step in combating communalism can be the secularisation of Doordarshan. It is too potent an instrument to be left in the hands of those who are communalists at heart and who do not realise the harm they are doing to the nation. Another step can be brought about by restructuring the police set-up. The police force is divided on communal lines in all States. How dangerous this factor is can be seen in Bihar and U.P. And let us not forget that a sad



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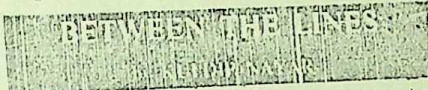
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# Communal Tensions

## I—Need For Functional Approach

By JAMAL KHWAJA

SOCIAL psychologists point out several factors in the genesis of communal violence at a particular place and time and its subsequent spread to other places. These factors are the habitual disposition of most Indians to view events in a communal rather than a functional perspective, the tendency readily and uncritically to accept fantastic rumours or irresponsible press reports, the tendency to resort to retaliatory violence against innocent persons, mutual fears of Hindus and Muslims regarding the future, the clash of economic interests and the tendency to blame others when things go wrong.

### ANTIPATHY

If a Hindu stabs another Hindu, or a Muslim passenger quarrels with a Muslim rickshaw puller, or a boy teases a girl belonging to his own community, or persons of the same religion compete for a job, using sharp practices to gain their end, the matter goes unnoticed. The moment, however, the parties belong to different religious, linguistic, regional or caste groups, we are inclined to forget the essentially functional nature of the situation and our sympathy or antipathy is aroused by focussing our attention on the communal labels of the persons or groups concerned. This is the essence of the communal approach to human relations.

A person having a communal approach perceives a situation in terms of the group label, while the person having a functional approach gives primary value to the qualities of the human beings and the objective features of the situation: supposing a hospital nurse (who is a south Indian Christian) commits a grave professional blunder, resulting in the death of a patient,

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Rumours are peculiar to the group from which they emanate. A typical Hindu rumour, for instance, is that several Hindu women have been raped, while a Muslim rumour might be that truckloads of corpses of Muslims have been thrown by the police into the river, instead of being buried, to avoid detection. Once communal tension or violence sets in, the people are prevented from discovering how unfounded or baseless are the rumours of the rival camps. The situation becomes worse if and when curfew is imposed and people are condemned to nurse their suspicions in pathetic isolation.

The attitude of vicarious vengeance on innocent members of the other group is responsible for the spread of violence to other places. While it is perfectly natural and understandable to defend one's life or property if one be attacked by professional criminals, hostile neighbours or political or religious fanatics, it is certainly utterly immoral and illogical to wreak vengeance on innocent members of the other group. The killing of two police constables on duty in Alichah on the night of August 16, 1980, as a reprisal against the earlier police brutality in Moradabad should, therefore, be unequivocally condemned by all sane persons.

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It is such fears rather than Hindu-Muslim hatred which gives so lethal a power to a petty rumour. There certainly are some Hindus and Muslims who suffer from a pathological hatred of the other community. But in general the thesis that the Hindus and the Muslims hate each other and that this hatred is rooted in their history or the clash of incompatible cultures is patently absurd. On the contrary, the fusion of Hindu and Muslim concepts, values, customs, art, literature, music and architecture during the past one thousand years, is a living objective reality. Again, the Hindu image of Arabic-Persian culture and the Muslim personality, on the one hand, and the Muslim image of Indian culture and the Hindu personality on the other, contain numerous admirable traits and qualities and only a few negative overtones.

### ASSUMPTION

There is the view that while all other invaders who settled down in India gradually got assimilated into Indian society and culture, the Muslims have retained their group identity and Semitic culture because of their persistent resistance to Aryan concepts. This view is based on the false assumption that the choice for Muslims was only between total acceptance or total rejection of Aryan concepts and values. However, as historians and sociologists point out, when two developed cultures interact they do not absorb each other, but rather initiate a process

BOARD OF DIRECTORS		Name, Description, Address and Occupation		Rupees	
Stock	Share	P. V. R. RAO	Nominee of ICI	25,00,000	1,00,00,000
Share	Share	"Sametia"	P.O., Pune 411 021.	5,75,00,000	7,00,00,000
Share	Share	BHARAT HARI SINGHANIA	I. C. S. (Retired)	1,00,00,000	25,00,000
Share	Share	J. K. House,	12, Alipore Road, Calcutta 700 027	4,03,20,000	1,80,000
Share	Share	GOVIND HARI SINGHANIA	Industrialist	25,00,000	4,03,20,000
Share	Share	Bombay 400 026.	Industrialist	1,80,000	3,70,00,000
Share	Share	BANSIDHAR SOMANI	99, Shree Niketan,	4,03,20,000	1,80,000
Share	Share	141, Mehrauda,	99, Shree Niketan,	4,03,20,000	1,80,000
Share	Share	Dilli	99, Shree Niketan,	4,03,20,000	1,80,000
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# Communal Tensions

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### ANTIPATHY

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A person having a communal approach perceives a situation in terms of the group label, while the person having a functional approach gives primary value to the qualities of the human beings and the objective features of the situation: supposing a hospital nurse (who is a south Indian Christian) commits a grave professional blunder resulting in the death of a patient, and this infuriates the doctor concerned (who is a Lucknow Muslim) to such an extent that he slaps the nurse in a fit of rage. Would it be reasonable for the nurse or others to make it a Muslim vs. Christian, or a north vs. south Indian issue?

Turning to the Moradabad incident, if the Muslims look at it primarily as a case of atrocities by the Hindu police against them, they will be inclined to turn to Muslims for help. On the other hand, if they look at it as a case of a simple police or administrative blunder they would seek sympathy and help from a much larger Indian reference group.

The functional approach to human relations does not deny the importance of religion, but looks upon different religions as having a common purpose—the development of the human individual. The functional approach is gradually gaining ground, though unfortunately the average Muslim is still in the grip of the communal approach, terms of religion, while the average Hindu in terms of caste.

The natural human tendency to accept whatever one hears from others, gives wings to rumours. Whether they are deliberately planted or not, or motive or is

honestly believed in by the source, it poisons attitudes with alarming rapidity. Neighbours or close associates find themselves alienated from one another in a matter of hours, though true friendship certainly survives the most vicious rumour.

Rumours are peculiar to the group from which they emanate. A typical Hindu rumour, for instance, is that several Hindu women have been raped, while a Muslim rumour might be that truckloads of corpses of Muslims have been thrown by the police into the river, instead of being buried, to avoid detection. Once communal tension or violence sets in, the people are prevented from discovering how unfounded or baseless are the rumours of the rival camps. The situation becomes worse if and when curfew is imposed and people are condemned to nurse their suspicions in pathetic isolation.

The attitude of vicarious vengeance on innocent members of the other group is responsible for the spread of violence to other places. While it is perfectly natural and understandable to defend one's life or property if one be attacked by professional criminals, hostile neighbours or political or religious fanatics, it is certainly utterly immoral and illogical to wreak vengeance on innocent members of the other group. The killing of two police constables on duty in Aligarh on the night of August 26, 1980, as a reprisal against the earlier police brutality in Moradabad should, therefore, be unequivocally condemned by all sane persons.

Mutual fears create the psychological climate in which rumours sprout and thrive. These mutual fears (often below the surface of consciousness) are not grasped by the other group.

### APPREHENSIONS

The Muslims are afraid that the superiority of the Hindus in numbers, education, industry and political or money power might one day lead to their almost complete domination. They are also afraid of being culturally assimilated by the majority and even of losing their religious identity as a group.

This fear is very disturbing since the Muslim is deeply proud of his Islamic identity as a member of the chosen community. Every communal riot revives his apprehensions. When the educated Hindu impatiently complains about the resistance of the Muslims to enter the national mainstream (including his acceptance of a common personal law) he has no insight into the inner fears of the Muslim mind.

Let us now turn to the Hindu perspective. Far from looking upon Muslims as a mere minority group (12 per cent), the average Hindu views the matter in a global context, and is apt to be disturbed by the fact that the Muslim population stretches right from Morocco in the far west to Indonesia in the far east. The historical reality of Muslim political domination of the Indian sub-

continent for several centuries plus the winds of Islamic revivalism, powerfully blowing in the Islamic world, stir inarticulate memories and fears of future possibilities. Organisations like the Jamaat-e-Islami with international links and plenty of funds for propaganda reinforce Hindu apprehensions.

It is such fears rather than Hindu-Muslim hatred which gives so lethal a power to a petty rumour. There certainly are some Hindus and Muslims who suffer from a pathological hatred of the other community. But in general the thesis that the Hindus and the Muslims hate each other and that this hatred is rooted in their history or the clash of incompatible cultures is patently absurd. On the contrary, the fusion of Hindu and Muslim concepts, values, customs, art, literature, music and architecture during the past one thousand years, is a living objective reality. Again, the Hindu image of Arabic-Persian culture and the Muslim personality, on the one hand, and the Muslim image of Indian culture and the Hindu personality on the other, contain numerous admirable traits and qualities and only a few negative overtones.

### ASSUMPTION

There is the view that while all other invaders who settled down in India gradually got assimilated into Indian society and culture, the Muslims have retained their group identity and Semitic culture because of their persistent resistance to Aryan concepts. This view is based on the false assumption that the choice for Muslims was only between total acceptance or total rejection of Aryan concepts and values. However, as historians and sociologists point out, when two developed cultures interact they do not absorb each other, but rather initiate a process of mutual give and take, gradually leading to the emotional integration of the two groups into a larger we-group. This is precisely what happened in India.

Economic rivalry between individuals or groups leads to a competitive struggle. This in turn leads to mutual hostility. If the rivals belong to different religious, linguistic, regional or caste groups, and if by emphasising the differences one is likely to get an edge over one's rival, one will do so. Actual communal violence, however, occurs only when some petty dispute between two groups triggers off an irrational violent behaviour which, in turn, creates an atmosphere of violence.

The rivals belonging to different groups then do not hesitate to fish in troubled waters for gaining their ends, whether economic or political. At times an unscrupulous self-seeker may directly or indirectly tempt trouble to scare away the weaker sections of society from a place he covets for his own use. This has happened in Aligarh in some cases. But the Moradabad incident provides a more complex instance of the inter-play of economic and cultural factors.

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The functional approach to human relations does not deny the importance of religion, but looks upon different religions as having a common purpose—the development of the human individual. The functional approach is gradually gaining ground, though unfortunately the average Muslim is still in the grip of the communal approach, in terms of religion, while the average Hindu in terms of caste.

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(To be continued)

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# Causes Of Communal Tensions—II

By JAMAL KHWAJA

ACCORDING to press reports, while the primary producers of brass goods in Moradabad are Muslim artisans the export trade was mainly in the hands of Hindu businessmen. Due to the growing affluence of some Muslims connected with the brass industry, and otherwise some Muslims have now entered the export trade thereby cutting into the hitherto fabulous profits of the Hindu middlemen. This has created tension between the two. Moreover, growing prosperity might have encouraged irresponsible or arrogant youth behaviour among some Muslims. When therefore some anti-social Muslim elements beat up a Harijan bridegroom a few days before the Eid last August, it is possible that some disgruntled Hindu traders or exporters or some anti-Congress elements (probably Hindu) egged on the Harijans to push a pig into the Eid congregation, calculated to spark off commotion or communal violence which could subsequently be used as a cover for harming and harassing their Muslim rivals.

## Industrial Pockets

Some persons contend that communal disturbances break out in Muslim-dominated industrial pockets precisely because the Hindus cannot tolerate Muslim prosperity, and wish to cripple Muslim industry. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that a communal riot, like a railway accident, attracts attention because it is rare. Moreover, other factors like temperamental excitability, group ratio, social class, urban or rural background also play a crucial role in a riot.

Jealousy is a universal emotion which cuts across the Hindu-Muslim divide. All of us, Hindus and Muslims, should be ready to face jealousy whenever we succeed. It seems to me that the essential response of those Hindus in Moradabad who submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister is essentially rooted in the fear that the growing affluence and the upcoming Arabic University in Moradabad, with the help of huge funds from the Islamic world, might encourage the approach of political or cultural separatism among the Muslim youth. While it is fantastic to believe that the proposed Arabic college and the residential colonies on the outskirts of the old city are an exercise in Islamic revivalism with foreign collusion, the fact is that what Indian Muslim youth need is certainly not Arabic or medieval education but modern knowledge and commitment to the scientific method.

Muslims all over the world are still groping for an Islamic vision which can enable them to combine their Islamic faith with modern science, secular democracy and humanism. The pioneering mission of the Aligarh movement under the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmad has been practically ignored by the Islamic world and the A.M.U. itself, for all its lip service to its founder.

The Jamaat-e-Islami of India and Pakistan and the movement of Islamic revivalism in Iran and elsewhere are not fully aware of all the nuances of man's history and his contemporary

situation, nor of the tremendous strides taken by the natural and the social sciences. The leaders of these movements thus prescribe simplistic solutions to highly complex problems on the basis of a romantic glorification of the undeniable achievements of Islam in the medieval period.

This approach does not help but positively hinders the cultural evolution of Muslims in India and elsewhere towards a critical modernity, which should not be confused with a rootless and imitative westernisation. Unfortunately even our most reputed Muslim theologians just do not bother to make this most crucial distinction.

The tendency to adopt a partisan approach and to shift the blame on others should be patent to every honest observer of the national scene. A lot of heated debate took place on Mr Girilal Jain's article concerning some hidden hand behind the Moradabad tragedy on August 13, 1980. Whether or not there was a hidden hand, the responsibility of the administration, government and of our people just cannot be explained away. If the hidden hand was foreign, it is not deeply distressing that we so easily become playthings to foreigners? If the hidden hand was internal, is it not tragic that we can be fooled by such elements? Despite long experience of suffering caused by periodic communal violence we still don't look at matters impartially and objectively or question our own failures of commission or omission but merely blame others.

Turning again to Moradabad, it is now generally known that a few days before Eid some Muslim boys had beaten up a Harijan bridegroom when his marriage party passed and played music before a mosque. If this is true, this was an unpardonably mean and loathsome deed, just like the killing of two police constables in Aligarh. Indeed this latter foul act must have profoundly altered the emotional response of our Hindu brethren towards the occurrence of the Moradabad tragedy on the very day of Muslim rejoicing.

## Spiritual Languages

I am sure if the constables had not been so brutally murdered in Aligarh the Moradabad tragedy would have evoked far deeper sympathy from the Indian people as a whole. Far from serving Islam or helping the Muslims, the persons who killed the two constables in Aligarh disgraced and endangered the Muslims themselves. Likewise, the persons who killed and looted the property of innocent Aligarh Muslims on September 8, 1980, stand exposed as anti-national and anti-Hindu.

Hinduism and Islam which command the loyalty of millions of sensible and peace-loving persons are not in conflict. They are only different spiritual languages with essentially the same meaning. Indeed, there is immense goodwill among the overwhelming majority in all sections of our people. Why then should Muslims seek a self-imposed isolation in the name of Islamic solidarity? Likewise, would it not be tragic, if out of despair at the ever recurring incidents of communal, caste or regional violence the Hindus were to give up the concept of secular democracy as an experiment which has failed.

(To be concluded)







# Causes Of Communal Tensions—III

By JAMAL KHWAJA

LET us now consider some therapeutic steps for preventing communal violence. The mere fire-fighting approach of cooling communal passions after a riot is obviously not enough. There must be a comprehensive plan for tackling the social, psychological, educational, economic and administrative aspects of the problem. Expert attention should be given to all aspects.

Not being an expert in this field, I shall confine myself to the task of changing peoples' attitudes and approach to human relations and to a few administrative steps for better coping with communal violence.

The most important task is the preparation of suitable textbooks calculated to promoting the emotional integration of our people, and the cultivation of a liberal scientific attitude. Right steps have already been taken in this direction by the government, but an enormous amount of work still needs to be done on a priority basis. Non-official associations engaged in publishing popular literature on these lines should also be given financial assistance.

The plea that textbooks should be free from all ideological bias and accurately portray facts, no matter how unpleasant, is valid in principle, but rather negatively interpreted in some quarters. The objective of communal harmony and emotional goal should be as unquestioned as the national duty to defend the integrity of the country against external attack. Textbooks have to be selective in any case because of limitations of teaching time and printing space. Is it, therefore, not pre-eminently sensible to put stress on those facts which help rather than hinder our basic national objectives.

## Anti-riot Force

The government has already decided to set up a special anti-riot force having substantial minority representation. Some secular minded persons appear to have some reservations on the ground that this erodes the concept of recruitment on merit, and that this might trigger the demand for reservation in other services, thus encouraging other sectional demands. Since, however, the anti-riot police force must be better trained for effectively checking communal violence with maximum impartiality and minimum loss of life and property, this objective will be better served if special efforts are made to have substantial minority representation in the force, just as we try to have women social workers for executing family welfare programmes. Job reservation is an entirely different matter.

It is axiomatic that persons guilty of anti-social acts during communal riots should be brought to book. But no offender has ever been punished so far. This makes some Muslim ob-

servers doubt the bona fides of the government and the Hindus in general and to remark that the rulers merely pretend to be concerned with the welfare of minorities just to win their vote. Such Muslims claim that Islamic militancy rather than the impotent talk of secularism is the only remedy.

Legal formalities of our present set-up create enormous obstacles in punishing criminals (even when their guilt is manifestly known) due to lack of evidence in the legal sense. This difficulty is not a lame excuse, but a truly insuperable one that defeats the most efficient and sincere administration, in prosecuting even the ordinary criminal because witnesses are afraid to testify in court or similar other reasons.

If we sincerely wish the guilty to be punished, we should suitably amend the legal and judicial set-up, though, of course, without giving up sound legal and democratic values. But the moment efforts are made in this direction a cry is raised that the independence of the judiciary or that democracy itself is in danger. This approach is patently wrong. Democracy will not be endangered if suitable changes are made in our legal and judicial set-up for the effective and speedy prosecution of crime.

## Complex Problem

Each district should have a high level communal harmony committee consisting of a dozen or so highly responsible and respected members of different communities for the purpose of ensuring a continuing dialogue between them on issues which are potentially productive of communal tension and conflict. The members of this committee should be non-political persons or public men reputed for their integrity and non-partisan approach to communal issues, and may be appointed by the governor at the advice of the DM. Mohalla committees should be constituted for the same purpose on the advice of the members of the district committee. The district and mohalla committees should meet all the year round (and not merely during or after a communal riot) on the principle that prevention is better than cure.

The problem is highly complex and no preferred simple solution such as the automatic transfer of the DM and SP whenever a riot takes place, punitive fines, composite police force, textbook reform can singly, or, in combination, fully succeed. Men are not machines that can be made to move in the desired direction at the pressing of the right button or lever. Men live in the dimension of history and of freedom and considerable time is needed for educating them and guiding them in the ideal direction. And even then passions and irrational forces will ever remain within our society.

(Concluded)







# A theory of communal riots

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

A NUMBER of empirical studies have been carried out on communal riots by this author as well as many others. In the light of these field investigations it is necessary to develop a broad theoretical framework. Of course, such a framework may not be very comprehensive as in every riot there are variegated factors in operation. Apart from certain broad aspects, each riot has some unique features which play no less important a role in igniting the situation and which must be duly taken note of. We propose to throw light on all these aspects in this article while attempting to develop a broad theoretical framework.

The first thing in this connection is that the age-old theory of putting the blame on the British policy of divide and rule or ascribing it to the colonial policy of underdevelopment of the economy is no longer sufficient to explain the nature of contemporary communal rioting in India. This theory had validity then and has partial validity even now in the form of a lingering legacy. But it is no longer adequate to explain comprehensively the complex nature of communal violence today.

In order to develop a plausible theory, it would be necessary to take

into account the dynamics of the economic development and social change accompanying it. Any theory which tends to ignore this cannot adequately explain the true nature of communal or caste violence in modern India. But unfortunately most of the explanations offered still tend to put more than necessary emphasis on the British imperialist policies on the one hand, and the role of history, specially of the Muslim period, on the other.

Such explanations, as we shall see later, do not explain much although they are not totally invalid. I would go a step further and maintain that, in the face of socio-economic changes, the role of different political parties in promoting communalism, even those claiming to be ideologically secular, will also have to be thoroughly examined because ultimately, at one stage or the other, they have led to the outbreak of communal violence. It would not do to blame certain 'traditionally communal parties only like the RSS, the Jamaat-e-Islami etc.. I do not, for a moment, maintain that these latter parties play in the present situation, any less blameworthy role; I would even say that they play the main role but this should not make us oblivious to the role of ruling parties, or even the opposition parties while out



of office, in promoting communalism, although claiming to be secular.

controlling political power and economic resources between the elites of the two communities.

Now, I will elaborate some of these points which can be said to have greater applicability today. To begin with, I would like to emphasise that in any communal riot micro as well as macro-level factors are involved. Whereas macro-level factors are mostly ideologically oriented, the micro-level factors tend to be local issue-oriented. However, and this is important, both the micro and macro-level factors are integrally connected with the socio-economic developments taking place in the country. In other words, the whole problem should be viewed in the perspective of the dynamics of social change and development. A social scientist has to take the changes at the base seriously in order to grapple with the changes taking place in the super-structure, although without trying to establish a one to one relationship between the two, as often observed.

In order to understand the nature of communal violence in modern India one also has to understand the role of various classes, social organizations, political parties — communal as well as secular — and the aspirations of the elites of the communities involved in the conflict. It should also be borne in mind that contrary to the impression carried by the people in general, religion is not the root cause of the communal conflict; it is, rather, a powerful instrument in the hands of those interests which seek to play their game through it. It is wrong to make it the cause celebre as is often sought to be done by vested interests, political as well as economic, who want to hide their real intentions from the masses.

Many good-intentioned secularists and rationalists, too, often make this mistake of holding religion as the main culprit in this matter. It is, to say the least, a rather unsociological approach to communal violence. In other words, one must distinguish between religious violence — the reasons for which lay in sectarian and doctrinaire differences — and communal violence — the reasons for which lay in the conflict over

It is precisely for this reason that communalism is borne of secular issues and communal parties led by, or communalism promoted by, secular leaders. It is not therefore surprising that the Muslim League in the pre-partition period was led by M.A. Jinnah, a thoroughly westernised, even modernised, Muslim and the chief ideologue of the Hindu Mahasabha happened to be Savarkar who had a modern outlook and stood for reforming Hinduism from within. Neither the Muslim League nor the Hindu Mahasabha was led by a mullah or a Shankracharya. Communalism is all about secular issues without involving any religious sectarian doctrine. So, the instrumentality of religion should not cause us any confusion as to the real nature of communalism.

Now, we first propose to deal with the macro-factors involved in promoting communalism and communal violence. The most important aspect of macro-level theorising about communalism is the class nature of the society on one hand, and under-development of the economy and scarcity of resources, on the other. The under-development of the economy often results in an uneven development of the economy, both community as well as region-wise and this uneven development throws up the problem of communal or regional identity. What we are witnessing in Assam and Punjab today is a similar phenomenon. But more of it later.

The uneven development community-wise leads to a situation where the inter-communal cohesive class structure does not develop, whether it be the capitalist class or the proletarian class. Thus, the upper classes of the less-developed community feel a strong sense of rivalry vis-a-vis their counterparts in the other community which has gained the upper hand. And, in such a situation, in order to win the support of the masses of one's community, the grievances are formulated not in one's class terms but in

terms of the ethos of one's community.

This can best be done by adding a few religio-cultural demands to the down-to-earth economic demands on one hand, and by mythologising the community's past on the other. Thus, we see that the communalists among both the communities have often glorified their respective past and projected it as a golden period free of any inter-class or inter-ethnic conflict. Thus, mythologising and romanticising one's community's past serves as a very powerful instrument for mobilising the masses for realising class aspirations. Such an instrument proves far more powerful in a socially backward society like India.

As a consequence of what has been stated above, in a backward and communally divided society like India, it becomes very difficult to develop class solidarity across communal lines, especially in the case of the working classes who, ironically, happen to be the main victims of communal violence. In their case a mythologized version of history as well as other powerful myths cleverly manipulated by the exploiting classes have far greater mobilizational potentiality than their own class interests. It is particularly true of the urban petty bourgeois classes.

This brings us to another important aspect of the theory of communalism. Communalism, all social scientists agree, is an urban phenomenon rooted among the petty bourgeoisie. In a backward society, it is among this class that traditional religion has the greatest appeal. The real base both of the RSS and the Jamaat-e-Islami is among the urban petty bourgeois classes. Their religious sentiments are successfully exploited for secular ends by the elites of the respective communities. Thus, the danger of communalism keeps on looming large on the socio-political horizon of India.

Another important characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie is its tendency to submit to authority. This is taken advantage of by the communal parties which develop anti-democratic authoritarian structures. Both the RSS and the Jamaat lay



emphasis on submission to authority rather than free thinking and democratic functioning. This also leads to blind submission to the authority of God or the holy scriptures, thus perpetuating utter conservatism in the society.

There is another problem at macro-level to be taken into account which is integrally connected with the dynamics of social change in the country. Socio-economic changes, especially in a tradition-bound society, bring about a deep sense of insecurity among those strata of society which are adversely affected by it. The working as well as the petty bourgeois classes are usually the worst affected in such a situation. They are already tradition-prone and the sense of insecurity accompanying socio-economic changes reinforces this tendency. Thus, they provide a fertile ground for religious revivalist movements. Many who feel that development and change should lead to greater rationality in society are baffled by this outcome. Their mechanical theories turn out not to be true. In fact the sense of insecurity generated by such socio-economic changes for a sizeable section of the society increases the appeal of religion by providing solace and reducing the psychological tensions involved.

The recent rise of religious fundamentalism must be seen in this perspective. However, there are two categories of religious revivalism and fundamentalism so far as the Indian socio-religious scene is concerned. In the first, I include the proliferation of yogis, babas and other religious gurus, teachers and tricksters of all varieties who exploit the growing sense of insecurity, the urban tensions and other stresses generated by the modern industrial pattern of life. They also satisfy the urge for social recognition by the new rich as well as secure important channels for the flow of black money to the ruling politicians from smugglers, black marketeers, profiteers and other similar sources.

Such religious frauds are fast multiplying in our urban areas, strengthening and promoting irrationalism. The ruling classes even

otherwise encourage such trends as these irrational cults generate illusions and a false consciousness among the masses, thus providing at least temporary stability to the crisis-ridden economic system. However, these cults and frauds do not directly lead to the promotion of communal conflict as they ostensibly keep out of the political arena. They do not reflect the aspirations of the rising bourgeoisie but provide them a haven and refuge.

In the second category, i.e., religious fundamentalism, I include movements like Vishwa Hindu Parishad or the Islamic fundamentalism. These movements reflect the rising ambitions of the petty bourgeoisie. Here, the religious revivalism has clearly directed political goals. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, seizing upon the opportunity provided by the conversion of a few Harijans to Islam launched a calculated propaganda offensive, thus intensifying communal conflict in the country. Many communal riots investigated by the present writer for example in Ahmedabad in December 1983, in Pune, Sholapur and Pandharpur thereafter, were the direct result of intensive campaigning by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. In the Meerut riots, lasting through September to early October last year, the hand of the VHP was not invisible. The VHP continues to publish millions of pamphlets in various languages and paint wall slogans in most of the towns and cities to promote militant Hinduism. It would not be wrong to say that VHP has provided new virulence to the communal canker in our society today. Such virulence is needed by a section of the ruling classes to manage the crisis in the system.

There is yet another related factor at macro-level which has important bearing on the theory of communal conflict in our society — the militant assertion of regional and communal identity. This assertion is the direct result of conflict over the share in limited economic resources. As aspirations rise and economic development is extremely sluggish, conflict is bound to result among different sections of society. The rising aspirations are expressed by these

sections of society through the medium of either regional or religious-cultural identity. Recently, we have seen its extreme manifestation in Assam and Punjab.

Assam has for long been a neglected area and has not had its due share of economic development. Moreover, for long the Bengalis monopolised government jobs and cultural positions. This, coupled with the immigration of the poor peasantry from Bangla Desh, created a sharp conflict situation in Assam which was expressed through the medium of regional and cultural identity. The Assamese nationality is asserting itself through the question of cultural identity of the people of Assam. This movement is being led by the middle-classes and petty bourgeoisie in Assam. These classes are asserting their regional identity vis-a-vis the Bengali identity in order to claim ever increasing share in economic development.

Today the Marwaris control the urban economy in Assam. One day, there is bound to be conflict between the native Assamese bourgeoisie and the Marwaris and hence the attempt of the RSS there to give a communal twist to the regional problem. The Assamese question since then has become far more complex. Due to clever manipulations by the RSS the emphasis on regional identity has weakened and communal identity has assumed more malignant militancy. The massacre of Bengali Muslims in the Neili area bears testimony to this shift in emphasis.

An important ingredient of the theory of communalism is the hypothesis that where the sense of regional and cultural identity is strong, the communal conflict tends to be weaker. This hypothesis had been valid so far in States like Kashmir, Assam, Punjab, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, etc. Today it is no longer so. We are witnessing sharp communal conflict in all these States. Assam, Punjab, Kerala, Tamil Nadu are turning into hotbeds of communal conflict. It would be interesting to examine some of these.

The Punjabis were the most assimilated cultural lot. The Sikhs and



Hindus often intermarried and the cases of one of the sons of a Punjabi Hindu family converting to Sikhism were also not rare. There had never been historical animosity between the Sikhs and Hindus either. At the time of partition also the Sikhs and Hindus stood united. With this history of harmony and coexistence, a sharp communal conflict has developed between the Hindus and the Sikhs. What went wrong? Why this sudden eruption of communal conflict?

The Sikhs are asserting their separate identity today as they feel aggrieved in a number of ways. The Akalis are not fighting only for religious demands. These have been accepted by the Central Government anyway. The real question pertains to economic demands. An adequate share in river waters, hydro-electric power, control over Chandigarh and Abohar and Fazilka districts are some of the important demands put forward by the Akalis. They, in other words, represent the aspirations of the Sikh bourgeoisie in Punjab which has come into direct conflict with the Punjabi Hindu bourgeoisie. The Akalis, by putting forward religious demands are trying to mobilize the Sikh masses. Here again is the question of the reassertion to Sikh fundamentalism to realise secular aspirations of the dominant classes among the Sikhs.

The assertion of a religious and communal identity by the Sikhs is a political necessity as the Jat Sikhs who are more prosperous and numerous live mostly in rural areas. Their new found prosperity has led to the breaking of traditional moral bonds and has also increased their secular aspirations for an ever-expanding share in economic development. The increasing alienation of Jat Sikhs from traditional religion alarmed the Akalis whose hold over them was loosening. Hence, they are trying to 'stem the rot' by a militant assertion of their communal identity on the one hand and, by putting forward economic demands representing the aspirations of the Sikh kulaks and bourgeoisie, on the other. The Anandpur Sahib resolution demanding complete autonomy

for the State of Punjab should also be viewed in this perspective.

This militant assertion of religious identity, while increasing the Akali hold over the Jat Sikh peasantry, has brought the Sikhs themselves in sharp conflict with the Punjabi Hindus and hence the fast developing communal imbroglio in Punjab.

Kerala was another State known for its communal harmony although three important communities — Hindus, Muslims and Christians — lived there for centuries. This State was also culturally and linguistically very well integrated and, hence, according to our hypothesis, inter-communal tensions were far less, if not totally absent. However, the socio-economic situation is fast changing and the new politics of changing alliances has introduced a strong element of communalism. The Muslim League joined the alliance (which was formed by the then Congress Party to dethrone the communists in 1956) on certain terms and conditions.

More such alliances came into existence and the alliance partners competed with each other in conceding demands put forward by various communal groups. The Nairs, not to be outdone by the others, encouraged the RSS to strengthen its base in Kerala. And, soon, with the advent of the RSS the communal virus began to spread very fast. Communal riots were unknown earlier in Kerala but with the Tellicherry riots in 1970 (in which the involvement of the RSS was established by the commission of inquiry) Kerala also now has the dubious distinction of having its place on the map of places beset with communal riots. After Hindu-Muslim riots, now Hindu-Christian riots are taking place in Kerala as well as in Tamil Nadu.

Thus, it is clear that the ruling political parties, both at the centre as well as the State level encourage, in order to ensure the maximum number of votes, communal as well as casteist tendencies. One can cite the latest example of elections in Kashmir. In order to capture a few more seats for her party in the valley, Mrs. Indira Gandhi made

speeches which clearly smacked of communalism. Moreover, she would speak one thing in the valley and another in Jammu. She tried to capitalise on the Hindu sentiments in Jammu and the RSS cadres worked for her party to ensure victory for the seats traditionally claimed by the BJP. Farouq Abdullah related by entering into an alliance with Mir Waiz who still questions the validity of Kashmir's accession to India. The so-called secular parties thus openly and unabashedly promoted rank communalism to win a few more seats at the hustings.

An economic crisis is deepening faster than ever before in this country. This crisis is the crisis of underdeveloped capitalism in the entire third world countries pursuing the path of capitalist development. The capitalist path of development cannot manage the crisis successfully and deliver the goods. It has to be managed by other means. Encouraging religious conservatism, promoting religious fundamentalism with obvious political motives to strengthen the traditional feudal bases of society are some of these other means. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in her capacity as Prime Minister, is known to have encouraged a delegation led by Shalwale of the Arya Samaj to launch a campaign against the conversions of a few Harijans to Islam. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad also took the clue and became far more aggressive. Such tactics not only endear her to the upper caste Hindus and ensure their votes but also help in strengthening the conservative bases of our society. Radio, T.V. and films are also being used for this end. The RSS, not surprisingly, is clandestinely, and wherever necessary openly, supporting the Prime Minister in her efforts. Thus communalism and conservatism, in our country today, are no longer the monopoly of traditional communal parties. All these other factors must be taken into account for any comprehensive theory of communal conflict in contemporary Indian society.

As pointed out in the beginning of this article, it is necessary to take both macro as well as micro level



factors into account to understand the real nature of communal conflict in our society. Intensive field studies of communal riots illustrate the micro-level factors which we will now consider.

More often than not, communal tension develops in a particular town on some local issue. Those who theorise often ignore the significance of these local issues—what I call the micro factors. As in pre-independence days, local issues are no longer confined to the playing of music before a mosque or the slaughter of a cow, although even today these have by no means lost their validity. But new factors, in keeping with the changing socio-economic pattern, have sprung up on the communal horizon. Some of these are competition between rival traders or small manufacturers of the two communities, competition between two gangs of hoodlums dealing either in smuggling, illicit arms or liquor or similar other anti-social activities, scheming by local industrial magnates to weaken trade unions by raising some communal issue, elections to local bodies or contest over some Assembly or parliamentary seats, etc.

Then, most of the riots tend to occur in medium sized towns (where petty bourgeois elements, who are usually quite conservative and often tend to be communal, predominate). Among these towns, those with a larger proportion of Muslims, say 20 to 50 per cent, are more riot prone. The tendency to be riot-prone gets further intensified if there is an entrepreneurial class of Muslims competing with, and challenging the monopoly of, the Hindu businessmen. Further, the tendency of such communal conflict gets far more intensified in towns with a previous history of communal riots.

18 Keeping these characteristics in mind, one can easily understand why Moradabad, Aligarh, Meerut, Jamsheerpur, Benaras, Bhivandi, Malegaon, the old city of Hyderabad etc., are communal hotbeds and scenes of frequent communal eruptions. Based on my field experiences, I would like to illuminate some of these factors.

In a ballot-box oriented democracy, the larger the proportion of a minority population in a town, the greater the political rivalry between the elites of the two communities who try to mobilize the voters by appealing to their respective communal identities? In Meerut, with a 40% Muslim population, even the Cong-I was divided on communal lines because a Muslim candidate for assembly or parliamentary election was rated as having a much better chance of winning. This frustrated the Hindu leadership of Cong-I which, it is alleged, came to a clandestine understanding with the local BJP leadership. The Mandir-Mazar controversy was merely a symbolic expression of the political ambitions of the two communities. A siege mentality was sought to be created among the Hindus through systematic propaganda in order to win their votes in any coming election.

In Biharsharif a powerful economic factor, rather than political one, was responsible for the communal carnage. This town in the Nalanda district of Bihar also has a large Muslim population—around 35%. There are extensive Muslim cemetery lands—many of them having fallen into disuse. Potato cultivation in this district is on the rise and quite profitable. Many cold-storage plants have also sprung up and as a consequence the land prices have been skyrocketing. The Yadavas, a cultivating caste, had their eyes on the cemetery lands and thus conflict arose between the Muslims and the Yadavas which soon erupted in communal violence. It is worth noting here that in these riots mainly the Yadavas were involved with the powerful backing of the RSS. The reason is obvious: the Yadavas had an economic interest vis-a-vis the Muslims.

There was a subsidiary political factor as well. Biharsharif is a centre of beedi manufacturing and mostly the poor Muslims and the low-caste Hindus are engaged in beedi making. The beedi labourers have been organised into trade unions by the CPI. The CPI thus had a stronghold and at the time of the communal violence, both the MLA

as well as the M.P. belonged to the CPI. But, the RSS had the advantage of changing class consciousness into communal consciousness. Even the poor Hindus and Muslims, forgetting their class interest, began to identify themselves, after the riot, more vigorously with their respective communities and were prone to manipulation by the elites of their communities.

In Godhra, the conflict was mainly between Sindhis and Ghanchi Muslims. The Ghanchi Muslims, quite predominant and industrious, are rising economically and today hold the monopoly of the transport trade in Panchmahal district. Sindhis and Ghanchi Muslims compete with each other in petty business also. Both communities are rivals in anti-social activities like running gambling dens, etc. There is also an acute shortage of housing and Sindhis, being more akin culturally and economically to the Ghanchi Muslims, have an eye on their properties. There is often dispute over positioning of stalls along the station road. Thus, communal violence frequently erupts between these two specific communities from amongst the Hindus and Muslims. Gujarati Hindus and other non-Ghanchi Muslims have not been involved directly in communal violence although they are highly sympathetic to their respective Hindu and Muslim communities.

From these instances, it is clear that the Hindus and Muslims should not be treated as homogeneous or unstratified communities. Often the specific castes or *biradaris* from amongst the Hindus and Muslims are involved in actual conflict although retaining the broad sympathy of their respective co-religionists. Even culturally and ethnically it is highly misleading to treat any religious community as homogeneous.

As pointed out above, economic competition often results in communal conflict. And specially so when the Muslims begin to acquire economic clout. Well, this has been an empirical fact observed at a number of places. We have already cited two examples above, i.e., from



Biharsharif and Godhra. More examples can be cited from Aligarh and Moradabad. Competition in the lock industry in Aligarh and the brass industry in Moradabad has led to communal conflict. It is on this basis that some social scientists have begun to argue that the communal riots in modern India constitute structural violence. This is true provided one concedes other equally or more important causative factors hinted at above.

This need not lead one to the fatalistic conclusion that the Muslims will have to pay with blood if they wish to inch ahead in the economic field, which would be too extreme a view, indeed. All it indicates is that in a backward capitalist economy and in a country like India with its multi-caste and multi-communal socio-economic formations, straight class-conflict is bound to be replaced by caste, class and community-class conflict, sometimes the class factor becoming predominant and at other times caste or community-factors becoming predominant. The European model of class conflict pure and simple cannot apply to a non-cohesive and highly stratified society with its own unique socio-economic formations like that of India. In addition to class conflict the complexities and uniqueness of the Indian situation is also reflected through caste and communal conflict.

Another important factor at micro-level is the role of anti-social elements organised into powerful gangs. These gangs operate in the urban underworld and deal in either illicit liquor, smuggling of foreign goods or illicit arms. The proliferation of the underworld is an indirect result of industrialisation on the one hand and the green revolution on the other, within the capitalist framework. The number of lowly paid workers and lumpen elements increase in the urban areas, boosting the demand for cheap illicit liquor, generation of black money leads to greater demand for smuggled goods and increased degree of agitations for better wages both in urban and rural areas lead to greater demands for illicit arms to suppress these agitations.

The role of these underworld gangs is being increasingly noted in communal riots as well. Baroda was the classic instance. The rivalry between two illicit liquor gangs led respectively by a Hindu and a Muslim erupted in the form of a communal riot during September-October 1982. One of the gangs led by Shiva Kahar enjoyed the support of a section of the ruling party. This section was allegedly encouraging these elements. In this connection, one must not forget that politicians today need both money as well as the muscle power of the underworld to finance and win elections. They in turn provide them with immunity against any action.

The involvement of anti-social elements in the Jamshehpur and Moradabad riots is also a known fact. If empirical data is any indication, this menace will continue to grow in the future. What is worse, the underworld is fast acquiring a greater and greater degree of autonomy. The politicians need that underworld more now than it needs them. In some cases, the powerful elements in the underworld are themselves taking to politics. Needless to say, this is becoming a most menacing combination.

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that to develop a comprehensive theory of communal conflict for the contemporary Indian society one will have to take macro as well as micro factors into account.

Among the micro factors are country-wide socio-economic changes as a result of following the capitalist path of development, policies pursued by the ruling political parties both at the Centre as well as in the States, the alliances struck by the so called secular parties, reckoning of caste and communal groups for ensuring victory at the hustings, deliberate attempt to encourage religious fundamentalism by the ruling classes in order to manage the deepening economic crisis through other means, etc. The ruling classes as a whole are responsible for encouraging caste and communal identities thus aggravating communal conflict. It would not do to blame the known communal parties and groups like the RSS, Jamaat-e-Islami, etc. only.

At micro-level one must take into account factors like the proportion of Muslim population, nature of economic competition between the two communities, history of communal riots in the area, election politics to local bodies, role of the anti-social elements, local political alliances etc. In any riot situation, both the micro and macro factors play an important role, of course, varying in degree from place to place. In certain extreme situations only macro or micro level factors can become the causative factors. For example in the Godhra and Baroda riots only micro level factors were important, the macro level ones being nearly absent.

In the Ahmedabad riot of 1969 on the other hand, the macro factor was largely responsible. The split in the ruling Congress, nationalisation of banks with its implied ideological shift to the Left made the rightist opposition parties like the Jana Sangh aggressively raise the bogey of Muslim aggressiveness and their refusal to merge with the 'national mainstream' and it went to the extent of adopting the resolution on 'Indianisation of Indian Muslims'. The Congress (O) at that time made an alliance with the Jana Sangh. Taking advantage of some trivial incidents near Jagannath temple, the Jana Sangh organised a large scale communal riot in Ahmedabad. The motive was to embarrass Indira Gandhi on the one hand, and to divert attention from the new Left-oriented economic policy to a fortuitous communal issue, on the other. The communal issue became the main topic of discussion in the country at the time.

While concluding, I would like to say with due emphasis that caste and communal identities are emotionally far stronger in this country than class identity and the ruling classes fully exploit this fact. With the slow process of economic growth, the conflict is bound to intensify and in India the ruling classes can easily divert the conflict from class to caste and communal channels. If we want to develop a scientific theory of communalism we better reckon with this reality sooner than later.



# Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Sikh Problem

A Comparative ...  
ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

this scenario. Not confident of raising the required capital for the project from domestic resources, and lacking faith in indigenous capacity to design and fabricate the required machinery for an integrated plant, the softer option was adopted for a turn-key project. The softer option was adopted for a turn-key project. The softer option was adopted for a turn-key project.

As an empirical account of the development of the steel industry since Independence the volume is rich in facts and figures. The author desires to be congratulated on his painstaking effort to compile the data he gathered assiduously. These facts have, however, not always been sifted with acerbic rigour, with the result that no conclusions have been arrived at. Take for instance the author's treatment of steel prices. He is right in quoting elaborately from the then Steel Minister, C. Subramaniam, to say that "we are importing a cost of a ton of the public sector project, whereas in the private sector plants, and that the investment in the public sector projects in the steel plants is much more than in the private sector projects because with early years—20, 40 or say 50 years ago—these plants cost much less and depreciation has been allowed to such an extent that the book value of these plants is very small". This is indeed the crux of the matter, and the authorities have shown it, as the quotation from the Steel Minister shows. And yet why has the price fixed in the manner of Nehru's idea of "cheap steel" to which the author has referred at p. 268? If so, the idea was hardly tenable, for as the author has himself pointed out, "the benefit of low ex-factory price did not get itself extended fully to the private consumer. The middlemen and fabricators reaped enormous profits during the existence of Hindustan Steel when the commodity was in short supply. What then was the real objective? The author has neither raised nor answered this question.

On the contrary, the author gives the impression that the price fixed for steel was adequate. "Mr. A. N. Banerji, who was Deputy Chairman of ISI, for a while, has told this writer", he has recorded, "that, if the plants had produced as just about adequate", "And then", he adds, "Mr. Banerji was not talking through his hat. As the general manager of Rourkela in the mid-sixties, he did provide dynamic leadership which helped retrieve the plant from a critical situation it had fallen into." (pp. 266-267). As if Banerji's role in Rourkela, whatever it was, and there are two opinions about this, proves that his view of the admin

The author has also shown unnecessary bias against one of the Steel Ministers, Mohan Kumaramangalam. His stray remarks about him that "the ex-communist became pragmatic when he took over as Minister" because he "became a party to the idea of a big investment at Jamshedpur" (p. 72), his description of Kumaramangalam as a "glamour boy" (p. 217), and his reproduction of the remark reported to have been made by Boothalingam, who has never concealed his Rightist inclination, that "JISCO nationalisation was unnecessary, it was more for political drama than for the real control since the Government had the majority shareholding", are, to say the least, superficial. Boothalingam's remarks are contradicted by the author himself later when he quotes his own contemporary writing in *The Hindu* that "several professional managerial executives in Calcutta have for some time been talking privately of the grievous mismanagement of JISCO's affairs which was bringing the entire private sector in the Eastern region into disrepute" (p. 156). And yet it is a good enough stick to beat Kumaramangalam with!

It is, however, in dealing with Kumaramangalam's idea of reorganisation that the author has shown complete lack of grasp of essentials. He has treated the scheme of reorganisation as one for a holding company, which it was not. The essence of the scheme, as the excerpt quoted in the book (pp. 282-294) from Kumaramangalam's speech on December 9, 1972, shows, was that the industry's point of view should be placed before the Minister and Parliament without the intervention of a bureaucracy which had little expertise in the matter. The fact that the Kumaramangalam model failed after his tragic death, when there was no one strong and influential enough to carry through this basic change from the bureaucratic to industrial culture, in fact of the strong opposition of the bureaucrats, proved nothing. Secretariat officials may have had the "last laugh" (p. 220), but subsequent performance does not prove that the laugh was justified, or indeed that it was the last one.

Nevertheless, these criticisms should not blind one to the fact that the author has rendered a signal service by narrating the half-forgotten story of the development of the steel industry in India since Independence, a story which deserves to be remembered for the vision and faith which inspired it. It is true that the facts narrated have not been adequately woven into a theoretical framework, with the result that contrary views have sometimes found expression. This defect can however be cured. In the meantime, the book deserves to be widely read. □

ism in modern times. After these general remarks we will proceed to discuss the similarities and specificities of the Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Sikh problem. Taking the similarities first both Muslims and Sikhs have been in minority in religious as well as modern political sense. In the case of Sikhs all of them and in case of Muslims most of them are of native origin as they are converts from amongst Indians. Of course the Sikhs are closer to the Hindus, both in terms of ethos and rituals than the Muslims. Nevertheless both perceive themselves as aggrieved minorities and equally strongly resist any attempt to subsume their distinctive identities by the majority community. Before partition while the Muslims maintained their separate political and religious identity, the Sikhs did not approve of any claim of the Hindus or the Muslims to subsume their identity, religious or political. Master Tara Singh, the then Akali leader, attacked the Punjabi Hindus for trying to include Sikhs in the category of Hindus and he added the Sikhs did not wish to be dominated by the Muslim or absorbed by the Hindus. In post-independence India too both the communities have been struggling to maintain their separate identity. In case of Muslims their personal law has become a symbol of their identity and they strongly resist any attempt to change it or to introduce common civil code. In case of Sikhs, apart from other things, the Punjabi language has acquired similar significance. In case of Muslims the communal Hindu often insist on introducing common civil code and in case of Sikhs the Punjabi Hindu disowned Punjabi as their mother tongue and owned up Hindi instead since early fifties. The minority community does not entertain the idea of minorities insisting on retaining their separate religious, cultural or linguistic identities as they apprehend strong political repercussions.

In fact this has turned into a vicious circle. More the two minorities insist on maintaining their separate identities more the majority apprehends political trouble and insists on wiping out symbols of these separate identities. The minorities, by this behaviour of majority, feel more threatened and insist on retaining their symbols of respective identities with ever greater obstinacy. This sense of identity gets further accentuated in the face of socio-economic or political crisis. At the time of Partition the Muslims were in direct confrontation with the Hindus and the Sikhs decided to come politically close to them. But this closeness of political identity was short lived and soon after the partition the Sikhs began to feel politically alienated when the Punjabi Hindus disowned Punjabi as their tongue and the Nehru Government refused to concede the







# Malaysia's

T.V. PAUL

Malaysia's much heralded under fire in recent industrialists, economists, Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohd. insensitiveness of the Japanese. Dr. Mahathir Mohd. when he spoke against the first Malaysia Japan colloquy last August. In a harsh criticism of Malaysian-Japanese relations economic colonialism.

Launched in 1982, under Prime Minister, the look for the Malaysian youth entrepreneurs specifically to learn on good work ethics, social and discipline, good management, aggressive salesmanship. Japanese entrepreneurs, we trading partner of the country.

The sudden upsurge of criticism policy could be traced to among Malaysians that Japan promises. Rather it was burgeoning Malaysian market. The government policies. The government prove that Japan is in an ad the trade relations between Malaysia sells raw materials and mineral ores which per cent of its exports to Japan. The Prime Minister, Japan has factored goods from Japan of manufactured goods that Malaysia — thermionic and photocells and diodes — Malaysia's exports to Japan 70 million or less. Malaysia imported the w Malaysia exported the w factored goods like cars and Japan. "We cannot and will hewers of wood and dr Mahathir declared.

The Malaysian discontent its growing balance of trade. According to statistics issued by the Ministry of Finance, in 1980 the

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MAINSTREAM March 2, 1985

have the ambitions of a rising bourgeoisie whereas the Muslims are struggling economically to keep themselves afloat. There is no bourgeois class among the Muslims do they have a powerful intellectual middle-class elite. They are educationally backward and have much less than proportionate representation both in government as well as in private sector.

Another specificity of the Hindu-Sikh problem is that due to higher degree of cultural assimilation the Hindu attitude towards the Sikhs, despite more aggressiveness on their part, is not as hostile as towards Muslims. Even the RSS Chief Balasahab Deoras condemned the anti-Sikh riots which took place in the first week of November, 1984 in Delhi and other places in the wake of assassination of Indira Gandhi. The RSS chief is not known to have condemned any anti-Muslim riot in the country. The national press also strongly condemned these riots and gave very extensive and sympathetic coverage to it which it richly deserved. However, no such coverage has been given to numerous communal riots in which Muslims have greatly suffered.

With the Punjab problem communalism has acquired yet another dimension which the social scientists have to understand and analyse. We have tried to throw some light on the similarities and specificities of this newly developed dimension. This is, needless to say, an initial attempt. Much more needs to be explored in this respect. □

## NOTES

1. Stephen Oren "The Sikhs: Congress and the Unionists in British Punjab, 1937-1947", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 8, Part 3, pp-413.
2. Even today the Jat-Muslim-Hind maintains that in Islam, religious cannot be separated from politics but no longer claims religious as establishment of Islamic theory or theory but rather to use its chief ideologue Maulana Maududi's term but talks of *Islamic-Din*, i.e., consolidating religion. Press, 1966), p-68 Cf. M.S. Dhami "Communalism in Punjab: An Exploratory Study", *Islamic Perspectives* (New Delhi: An Studies, Bombay Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1984, pp-182.
3. *Minority Politics in Punjab*, (Princeton University Press, 1966), p-68 Cf. M.S. Dhami "Communalism in Punjab: An Exploratory Study", *Islamic Perspectives* (New Delhi: An Studies, Bombay Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1984, pp-182.
4. Quoted by M.S. Dhami *Ibid* from *Minority Politics in the Punjab*, pp-69.
5. Quoted by M.S. Dhami *Ibid* from Joyce Pattinson, "A Description of Discrepancy between Sikh Political Ideal and Sikh Political Practice", in Myron J. Brunson, *Transnational Anthropology*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Brunson, Transnational Books, pp-161-62.
6. See Muslim Memorandum to Viceroy, 1906 reproduced by *Muslim India*, March, 1983, pp-129.
7. Report of the Enquiry Committee appointed by the Council of the All India Muslim League to enquire into Muslim grievances in Punjab, November 15, 1938, (Punjab Report, 1938), p-7. Cf. Uma Kaura *Muslims and Indian Nationalism* (Delhi, 1977) pp-124.
8. Letter by Ashok Row Kaviar *Indian Express*.
9. See *Times of India* dated December 19, 1984 "Concept of a Sikh Nation".
10. Harbans Singh "Sikhism: Challenges and Response (1849-1973)", *Studies in Sikhism and Comparative Religion*, Vol. 11 No. 1 (April 1983) pp-96-97 Cf. M.S. Dhami *op. cit.*, pp-175.
11. See *Times of India* December 31, 1984, pp-9 "SGPC is firm on Anandpur nagra". □

The economic progress has its own dynamics and if it is thwarted at any stage by government or any other agency, it creates strong resentment as strong as when one is completely deprived of any economy progress. The Muslims fall in the later category. They incessantly feel deprived of due share in the economic progress, and justly so. The Sikhs have 'arrived', to use a popular terminology but are being prevented from 'taking off' economically whereas the Muslims are yet to 'arrive' economically.

The Sikh fundamentalism, it must be noted, like that of the Israelis, has come to be a powerful instrument of the *kulaks* and bourgeoisie whereas, in the case of Muslims, it tends to be an instrument in the hands of feudal elements who exploit it to perpetuate the current *status quo*.

Due to success of the green revolution the Jat Sikh peasantry has been able to generate good deal of surplus which it wants to invest in more profitable industries. However, due to Central Government policy, there is not much encouragement to setting up big industries in Punjab. This creates frustration among the rich peasantry. The Akalis, it is well known, derive their support mainly from the Jat *kulaks* and big landlords. There is, therefore, great deal of pressure, on the Akali leadership to demand autonomy for Punjab.

The youth, however, remains unemployed and takes to extremism in politics. It gets attracted to the slogan of Khalistan which, they think, would solve all their economic problems. The Muslim youth earlier had succumbed to similar slogan for Pakistan thinking that it would be an economic paradise for them. Pakistan did fulfil the dream of a 'section of Muslim mercantile bourgeoisie' to emerge as industrial bourgeoisie in that country, although it has remained weak as a class.

Pakistan also enabled to provide high status government jobs to the educated Muslim youth, specially from UP and Punjab. Similar aspirations are driving many Sikhs to support the Akali agitation for greater autonomy in the form of Anandpur Sahib. Resolution of the extremists demand for Khalistan. The Khalistan demand has found greater support among the Sikhs abroad. One of the reasons could be that some of the rich Sikhs abroad are looking for greater opportunities for investment in a country where they do not have to compete with the powerful Hindu bourgeoisie. However, it should not be treated as the only reason.

In contemporary India (in post-partition period) the Muslims have no such ambitions. Their elite realised their ambitions in the shape of Pakistan in 1947. The 'Muslim communalism' has, therefore, lost all its aggressive. The Sikh communalism in Punjab tends to be quite aggressive in action (the situation has somewhat changed after the army action) and is hyperbolic in tone. The degree of militancy shown by the Sikh youth in Punjab is much higher than that of Muslim youth in any part of India, including Kashmir although the Muslims are much bigger minority compared to the Sikhs. Again the reasons are not far to seek. The Sikhs







# Secularism takes a back seat

TWO sets of rumours are currently doing the rounds in Kashmir - both related to the Rajya Sabha election on Wednesday. The question is: will Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, Union Minister for Tourism, be elected to the Upper House? And, will he get the support of the National Conference (Farooq)?

One set of rumours would have the people believe that Dr Farooq Abdullah, former Chief Minister and son of Sheikh Abdullah, has already come to an agreement with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi which will pave the way for a coalition government with the Congress (I) after the election of the Mufti. According to these rumours, the N.C.(F) has kept itself out of the Rajya Sabha polls only to ensure the election of the Mufti and thus rid the State of the Congress (I) leader who is believed to have been the key instrument behind the National Conference split in July, 1984, and the subsequent formation of the G.M. Shah Government. Since the Central Congress (I) leaders have now realised the seriousness of that mistake and come to the conclusion that Dr Abdullah is the only safe bet in Kashmir, it is said, they have decided to hand him back the reins of Government.

The other set of rumours does not lay much store by the reported or projected Rajiv-Abdullah accord. According to these, the recent spate of violent incidents in the valley has made it difficult for the Centre to restore a representative government in the State. Governor Jagmohan will, therefore, continue to retain his firm grip on the administration and the State will remain under President's rule until the law and order agencies succeed in restoring peace.

Even Dr Abdullah, it is said, would find it difficult to head a coalition government with the Congress (I) in view of his consistent stand in favour of early elections. The growing strength of fundamentalist and anti-national forces, the frustration that has set in among the secular elements and the growing alienation of the people have rendered Dr Abdullah helpless in tackling the violence that has shattered the communal harmony of the State.

All eyes are, therefore, fixed on Wednesday's poll and the subsequent parleys in Delhi between Dr Abdullah and the Congress (I) leaders. Most observers in the State Capital believe that Dr Abdullah may finally agree to head a coalition government for the time being, provided the Centre agrees to hold elections to the State Assembly early and the Congress (I) does not insist on including National Conference (Khalida) members as its nominees in the new Ministry. An immediate election is in any case ruled out because winter is not far off. At the earliest, the poll can be held only in March, 1987.

The Centre is, however, under considerable pressure from a section of the State Congress (I) leaders and bureaucracy to let Mr Jagmohan handle the present situation. The political compulsions of a representative government, they say, will make it difficult to deal effectively with communal and fundamentalist elements.

Most experienced observers in the State, on the other hand, feel that President's rule has already done enough damage. They view the present violent phase in the State's politics as a consequence and not the cause of the suspension of the democratic process. Had the rulers at Delhi not organised the midnight coup of July, 1984, they say, the State would not have been plunged into the present bloody mess. The rampant corruption of the Shah regime, its unconcern for

the people and its unrepresentative character - followed by the extended rule of Mr Jagmohan - have been the main factors responsible for the distrust among the State's people of the powers that be in Delhi.

The situation, thus, provides a perfect setting for the pro-Pakistan elements to direct public anger into anti-India directions and instigate anti-Hindu riots. The recent burning of the bridge named after the progressive Kashmiri poet Mahjoor, the continuing clashes between pro-Pakistan workers of the Kashmir Muslim United Front and the student wing

## THE STATES Jammu and Kashmir

of the N.C. (F), the series of Friday bandhs and calls for keeping the shops open on Sundays, the writing of pro-Pakistan slogans on walls in Anantnag and some other towns of the valley, the earlier communal clashes in Kishtwar in the Jammu province and the flaunting of Gilani portraits - all show the working of a mastermind.

With the secular forces rendered ineffective, the State administration has handled all these events as "aberrations" to be treated as individual law and order problems. The use of security forces to handle a foreign-inspired political conspiracy has only made matters worse. Had the actions of the security forces been supplemented by political campaigning, these observers believe, the situation could certainly have been handled better.

Any continuation of the present regime and the suspension of democratic institutions of governance, it is argued, will only help the anti-national elements. It is, therefore, imperative to restore democracy and representative government - and soon.

While all attention is focussed on the Kashmir valley, the people of Jammu are openly alleging that the recent clash between the tribal-toting Shiv Sena boys and the Sanatan Dharma men on the Dusshra day was not an innocent affair. The Shiv Sena is said to have the blessings of the local Congress (I) leaders. That is why the police looked the other way when they attacked the processionists, according to local observers. They also view it as a consequence of the controversy over the State's takeover of the Vaishno Devi complex.

TAILPIECE: Told about Mr Jagmohan's role in cleaning up and beautifying Srinagar, an old Kashmiri strutting along the Jhelum said: "Is he a municipal officer? I thought he was the State's Governor. Isn't he?"

D.C.



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D.C.



# SECULARISM AND CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

S. P. AIYAR

## I

Any one who undertakes to study the Constitution of India from the point of view of the place religion occupies in the system of government envisaged by it is immediately struck by the fact that the word 'secular' is not used in this document except in article 28. That this was not a mere accident is borne out by the debates of the Constituent Assembly. On more than one occasion attempts were made to use the word but the suggestions were not accepted. It is not difficult to know why the framers of the Constitution took this position. They were conscious of the fact that they had embarked on framing a constitution for a country which had a long and continuous religious tradition. However, the word 'secularism' in one of its more pronounced aspects seems to suggest a total separation of state and religion. Even a superficial knowledge of European history since the days of the Investiture Controversy during the Middle Ages suggests to the mind an element of godlessness as the concept. Roget's Thesaurus clubs together the words *hylotheism, materialism, dialectical materialism, Marxism, nihilism, secularism, worldliness, fleshiness*. It was therefore to avoid a word which had such associations, for the framers of the Constitution had no intention of setting up a state which frowned upon religion.

## II

It is not my contention that the word secularism has only one meaning for in the course of its evolution the word has come to mean other things as well. According to current usage it means keeping religion out of the institutional arrangements of government and the legal process. It does imply that religion will not be a factor in determining the relations between the state and the citizens. In this sense, the process of modernization does involve limiting the sphere of religion thus preventing it from interfering with the processes of government. Those who framed the Constitution of India undoubtedly shared this view although they were obviously chary of using the word.

They were all the time conscious that they were setting up a secular state, as they understood it. For instance, Jawaharlal Nehru said in 1949:

"I am convinced that the measure of India's progress will be the measure of our giving full effect to what has been called a secular state. That of course, does not mean a people lacking morals or religion. It means that while religion is completely free, the state, including in its wide fold various religions and cultures, gives protection and opportunities to all and thus brings about an atmosphere of tolerance and co-operation".

The Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had this to say:

"It does not mean that we can abolish religion; it does not mean that we shall not take into consideration the religious sentiments of the people. All that a secular state means is that this Parliament shall not be competent to impose any particular religion upon the rest of the people. That is the only limitation that the Constitution recognizes. We are not here to flout the sentiments of the people".

Similar views were expressed in the Constituent Assembly. But constitution-classifiers and those concerned primarily with affixing appropriate labels on different kinds of states have found difficulty in describing India as a secular state on the ground that the Constitution does not clearly separate the roles of state and religion. According to some, India is more appropriately described as a non-denominational state for it seeks to treat all religions equally. In his dissertation on *The Secular State and India*, Ved Prakash Luthera comes to the conclusion that the Constitution has set up a *jurisdictional state*, a state which is primarily concerned with the preservation of religious freedom and therefore seeks to protect the rights of the minorities from the inroads of the church of the majority religion.

In my opinion, these pedagogical niceties do not take us anywhere in understanding the spirit of India's Constitution. It sought to establish the rule of law by excluding religion as a factor in the process of government but it also guaranteed the right to religion to all communities. The state is expected to stand above all religions, treating all of them equally and giving protection and patronage when needed. But the state itself has no official religion. It is decidedly not a theocratic state.

## III

If one thinks of secularism as involving a clear demarcation of state and religion it would appear as being totally alien to the Hindu and Buddhist traditions of India. One could then come to the conclusion that the principle of secularism, as embodied in the Constitution of India, is wholly a product of the Western constitutional tradition. Thus Mr. V.K. Sinha asserts that 'Secularism, as we understand it, is a product of the West; it is a result of the special problems created



by the rise of the Christian Church." (*Secularism in India*, p. 8) But we must not ignore the fact that Hinduism, by its very nature, has been all-pervasive and could not have accepted any demarcation of state and religion. Mr. Sinha is undoubtedly right when he argues further that the Hindu concept of justice, which in practice made the stringency of the punishment dependent on the caste of the criminal, was a violation of the rule of law which is implicit in secularism.

Mr. Sinha fails to consider secularism in its other aspect, viz., equal treatment of all religions. If this aspect is taken into account secularism may be seen as having its roots in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. The point of view is brilliantly made by the distinguished historian K.A. Nilakanta Sastri in *The Concept of a Secular State* (Current Thought Series, n.d., but probably 1948). He points out to the ideal of the Hindu king acting equally towards all the faiths in his realm and extending his patronage to all. What is most important from the standpoint of secularism, he observes, is that "the area of freedom of thought and action guaranteed by the Hindu state alike to individuals and to groups has seldom been surpassed or even equalled in any other social organisation". The principle of tolerance was engraved in the *Twelfth Rock Edict of Ashoka*. Upholding tolerance to faiths other than own, the Edict said:

"If one is acting thus, he is both promoting his own sect and benefiting other sects. If one is acting otherwise than thus, he is both hurting his own sect and wronging other sects as well. For whosoever praises his own sect, i.e. with the view of glorifying his own sect,—if he is acting thus, he rather injures his own sect very severely".

Nilakanta Sastri also cites the ennobling example of the temple which Akbar had built, on the walls of which he had inscribed the following words:

"He who from insincere motives destroys this temple, should first destroy his own place of worship for, if we allow the dictates of the heart, we must bear up with all men; but if we look to the external, we find everything proper to be destroyed".

It cannot be said that these are only stray examples in India's long history, for several other examples may be cited. The purpose is not to glorify India's ancient traditions in a spirit of uncritical adulation but to show that the secularism of the Indian Constitution is in tune with the tradition of religious tolerance in India. The sociologist M.N. Srinivas comes to a similar conclusion. Finally, Dr. P.B. Gajendragadkar after examining the views of Sinha and others has written:

"But the point which I wish to emphasize is that the spirit of tolerance, born out of a firm conviction that all religions are entitled to freedom and each one of them has an element of truth, while none has the monopoly of truth—this is a legacy of Hindu philosophy, and that is the cornerstone of secu-

larism... This is a special feature of Hindu philosophy, religion and culture and as such it is this foundation that the whole edifice of secular rests. This aspect of Hindu tradition, I venture to suggest, does form the theoretical basis of secularism". (*Secularism and the Constitution of India*, p. 101)

#### IV

The principle of secularism, as explained in this context is clearly revealed in several articles of the Constitution; it is, in fact, the informing spirit of the document. The Preamble clearly announces "Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship" as a basic right of all citizens of India and this is spelled out in detail in Part III of the Constitution. It prohibits the state from discriminating against any citizen on "grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them" in respect to: (a) access to public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment and (b) the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of state funds or dedicated wholly or partly to the general public. These provisions, however, do not prevent the state from making special provisions for women and children or for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

The Constitution provides for equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in connection with, any employment or office under the State" (Art. 10.2). State governments were enabled to make special provisions for the backward classes of citizens, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes as a result of a Constitutional Amendment to Art. 15. Prior to this, the Madras Government's Communal Order for the reservation of seats in educational institutions to students of the backward classes had been fully challenged in *Champakam Dorairajan v. State of Madras*. It was the judgment in this case which led to the amendment of this article.

#### V

It has been argued that the reservation of seats for members of the backward classes, to Scheduled Castes and Tribes does violate the principle of equality. But this secularism is a valued principle of our Constitution, it is also equally the responsibility of the state to carry out policies for the development of those who have been socially handicapped as a result of the inequities of the caste system. There is widespread support for the view of Dr. P.B. Gajendragadkar.

"But the facts of history cannot be ignored. Any doctrinaire opposition to the provisions of Art. 15 (4)... would be unjustified and unnecessary. Centuries certain sections of the Hindu community have suffered very severe social, educational







and other scriptures and found that it was optional for a Muslim to kill a goat for one person or a cow or camel for seven persons. Therefore there was no infringement of religious freedom in the laws which were being challenged. Among other things the Court took into view the fact that Hindus do regard the cow as sacred although they did not make it the sole reason for their judgement. The Court held that a total ban on the slaughter of cows of all ages was quite reasonable.

Examining the case, Dr. P.B. Gajendragadkar who was a party to the judgement observes that in deciding the cow-slaughter question we should be guided by the economics of the decision rather than by religious doctrines. Dr. S.P. Sathe of Bombay University has made the point that the Court should have taken into consideration the nature of the option given to the devout Muslim in the context of the conditions prevailing in India. Since a camel is not easily available in India and the sacrifice of a cow for seven persons is cheaper than offering seven goats as required by religious practice, the Court's decision did infringe on the petitioner's right to religion.

It is unnecessary for us to go into the legal aspects of the decision taken in *Mohd. Hanif Quareshi v. The State of Bihar*. But what is important from the point of view of the theme of this article is the contradiction involved in Art. 48. On the one hand it mentions the importance of organising agriculture and animal husbandry on scientific lines and, on the other, requires the state to take steps for the prevention of the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle. In my opinion the contradiction is only apparent and can be settled by the Court without a constitutional amendment to Art. 48.

### VIII

THE Government of India has over the years taken several measures which have had the effect of modernising the laws and practices of the Hindus. But it took six years to enact two important measures. These pertain to giving women equal rights with men in matters of inheritance and establishing monogamy while providing for divorce. One tends to exaggerate the forces of traditionalism which have opposed the passage of the Hindu Code Bill but we must view these changes in the light of the flexibility which Hinduism has shown over several centuries. On the other hand, the Government of India is somewhat inhibited in taking steps affecting the religious minorities in the country.

There can be no doubt that considering the secular spirit of India's Constitution, a Uniform Civil Code is and ought to be the ideal. Art. 44 in the Directive Principles of State Policy provides for the enactment of such a code. Nehru's views on this question were influenced by his anxiety to ensure that nothing was done to hurt the religious sensibilities of the Muslims. There is obviously no point in providing for a code when a whole community is still unprepared for it. But there is here a problem, which has frequently confronted the reformer in all modernising situations. If one has to wait for changes in the attitudes of people before an important measure is taken, how long will this process take? And how is one to be certain that the

right time has arrived? So far as the Uniform Civil Code is concerned much remains to be done by parties and voluntary organisations or even educated Muslim elites to educate the masses and change their attitudes.

Curiously enough, the demand for a Uniform Civil Code is supported both by ardent modernizers and by religious obscurantists who find in it a powerful weapon for increasing the discontent among Muslims. In such a situation a move for a Uniform Civil Code may have totally unintended political consequences. Above all, the history of legislation in India suggests the unwisdom of making laws without the voluntary support of a majority of the people. But impatient modernizers point to the ineffectiveness of the Personal Law of the Muslims and demand the immediate enactment of a Uniform Civil Code.

### IX

ALTHOUGH human attitudes and behaviour change, particularly when they have the force of religious injunctions, the forces of modernization are rapidly undermining many of these beliefs. It is remarkable how a practice like untouchability, which has persisted for centuries in the traditional village society, shows signs of cracking up under the effects of industrialization and urbanization, the village cinema. But the forces of obscurantism, which Muslim cannot be dissolved by legislation, cannot be dissolved by legislation. It is noble the intentions of the law-maker. But the change in the direction of modernity must come from the people themselves. The more progress in all communities have a responsibility to change the outlook of people. On these questions is silently on in conference. These are not many journals in the country for discussion of the questions of modernity and our newspapers are not particularly concerned with these problems.

These developments are some indications that change are taking place but any attempt to hasten the process of modernization through an over-zealous with the support of political parties who are not many journals in the country for discussion of the questions of modernity and our newspapers are not particularly concerned with these problems. Walter Lippmann has wisely said that statute books are cluttered with legislation which represents somebody's good intention, rather than a sight into what is possible. And this cannot be imposed in a democracy where the law to be made must represent the real desire or obtain the biggest portion of the community.

The Constitution of India is not a past but of the future: it is no more a framework within which Indian Society can evolve. The ideals enshrined in the Preamble and the Directive Principles. At the moment, our constitutional ideas have outstripped other aspects of modernization. Given time, patience and a reform, the gap will eventually close.



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Curiously enough, the demand for a Uniform Code is supported both by ardent modernizers who concern for the secularization of social institutions as well as Hindu obscurantists who find in the Code a powerful weapon for increasing the discomfiture of Muslims. In such a situation a move for a Uniform Civil Code may have totally unintended political effects. Above all, the history of legislation in all countries suggests the unwisdom of making laws which do not have the voluntary support of a majority of the people. But impatient modernizers point to the inequities of the Personal Law of the Muslims and demand the immediate enactment of a Uniform Civil Code.

### IX

ALTHOUGH human attitudes and behaviour are in a constant change, particularly when they have the support of religious injunctions, the forces of modernization are rapidly undermining many of these beliefs. It is remarkable how a practice like untouchability which persisted for centuries in the traditional society shows signs of cracking up under the effects of industrialization and urbanization, the village bus and cinema. But the forces of obscurantism, Hindu and Muslim, cannot be dissolved by legislation, however noble the intentions of the law-maker. The urgent change in the direction of modernity must come from the people themselves. The more progressive intellectuals in all communities have a responsibility to contribute to changing the outlook of people. That a debate on these questions is silently on in conferences and seminars is an indication that society is undergoing change. Even organized obscurantism is an impediment to the process of modernization. Unfortunately, there are not many journals in the country devoted to discussion of the questions of modernity and tradition and our newspapers are not particularly interested in these problems.

These developments are some indication that changes are taking place but any attempt to hasten the process of modernization through an over-zealous Parliament with the support of political parties whose own pretensions of modernity may only be skin-deep will be futile. Walter Lippmann has wisely said: "statute books are cluttered with legislation that represents somebody's good intention, rather than insight into what is possible. And these laws are imposed in a democracy where the sense of democracy is strong. The law to be more than a mere must represent the real desire or obtain the consent of the biggest portion of the community".

The Constitution of India is not a document of the past but of the future: it is no more than a framework within which Indian Society can evolve towards the ideals enshrined in the Preamble and its many provisions. At the moment, our constitutional and political ideas have outstripped other aspects of social modernization. Given time, patience and cautious effort, the gap will eventually close in.

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## TOWARD A SOCIOLOGY OF SECULARISM

RAJANI KANTH

### I

It is not surprising that a proposed sociology of secularism should become, in fact, a sociology of religion. There is little inadvertence in such a transformation for one thing it can hardly be considered a transformation for the one pre-supposes the other. Sociological recognition is not always extended to the fact. Only a radical sociology free of metaphysical trappings can be fully aware of the importance of religion. The emphasis altogether too necessary even in the western world where a not wholly unrespectable religious 'sociology', sponsored by wealthy ecclesiastical organisations, flourishes. Where religion and ideology co-exist and even compete with each other in such a grotesque fashion, there surely, one would suppose, a secular society does not exist. Mutual antagonism only exist peacefully in mythology—a society that accommodates them must necessarily live in self-delusion. Science and Ideology are originally given as incompatible but when interchange between them is one of concession and comfort, there is room for wonderment and doubt as to their precise status in the tapestry of western intellectual tradition which is such a triumphant academic example of the rest of the world. For one thing, not the least

repugnant fallout when science and ideology are joyful participants in the semantic confusion between the conceptual categories themselves. To begin with the so-termed 'secularism' of the industrial west is considered axiomatic by the western sociologist itself a sizable misnomer, incredible were it not unassuming. In the benign usage of the term, secularism is understood quite simply as that which is religious, a usage recommended and represented by the separation, historically, of the church from state, a usage enshrined often in grandiloquent institutions that proclaim in all pomposity the freedom of man. If secularism were little more than the freedom delineated by statute of the several liberties of man pertaining to the realm of belief and conscience, surely the complacency of the 'civilised' and 'democratic' world is understandable: they shall inherit the earth. But such joy is of necessarily shortlived. To seek the roots of secularism in the institutional location of religion is to sail upstream a river to reach the

The historical transition in man's consciousness of himself, though no independent movement in itself, has all the flavour of dialectics, providing in its symmetry periscopes into the sociology of knowledge. The relationship between religion and society (whatever these unitary terms might actually represent) has been perceived in an exhilarating variety of forms from the imponderable to the succinct, providing interesting commentaries on existence and consciousness alike. Extremities of interpretation both and abound. In all seriousness, for example, Fernand Braudel (*The Ancient City*) derived society from religion and even more fervently Emile Durkheim (*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*) revealed the mystical relation by deriving religion from society. Quite naturally both these interpretations are slightly absurd for the simple reason that neither Society (with a capital 'S') nor Religion (with an equally important 'R') are the analytical super-egos as they are captured by both priest and layman alike. Both in essence, relative historical categories which form their particular historical courses, both reacting and shaping the social forces that make history, both are in the first place. It remains a matter of consequence, therefore, that so much sociological genius is exercised in the backwaters of speculation and perennial slopes of ideology, when it comes to the scientific study of religion. A detour into the realm of current theory, it is felt, can only be an appropriate illustration of the problem at hand.

### II

PETER Worsley<sup>1</sup>, in an article dedicated to establish and explore religion as a 'category' makes the following observations that are classic in their ability to convey nothing and everything at the same time. "Because religion is intrinsically unbounded in its field of operation, because it is ideal as well as social, it is always potentially innovative, like all innovations potentially hurtful to established interests. But religion, it ought to be said is not intrinsically conservative nor revolutionary. It can be infused with any kind of social content not political; there are both the religions of the oppres-



discussed in this book and the kinds of religion that have been summed up in the label given to the Church of England as the 'Conservative Party at prayer'. The relationship of religious belief, let alone movements and organisations, to the established power thus varies, and is not a matter for metaphysical pronouncement disguised as sociological generalisation. It requires empirical investigation to see what the facts are. We cannot know *a priori* (except to the extent that one can predict, e.g. that such-and-such a type of religion is appropriate to this or that social group).

This excellent passage, of course, maintains that religion is anything and everything. The first question that crops to mind is, naturally, what, then, is the specificity of the religious phenomenon? Or, in other words, what is religion? In a sense these questions are justified because obviously we do not share Prof. Nadel's intuitive understanding of the 'intrinsic' nature of religion. In another sense, the questions can only lead away from the solution because the questions remain, like Peter Worsley's analysis, essentially historical and abstract. We have missed out the datum, a concrete historical situation, without which we are doomed to remain obscure. On the one hand Nadel, whom Worsley quotes in his paper, gives an equally dispirited description of the four 'competences' of religion:

(i) the capacity of religion to furnish certain elements to the view of the world of experience which intelligence is driven to demand;

(ii) the capacity to announce and maintain moral laws, or, more generally, an 'economic ethic', that is, a competence to guide the practical impulses for action;

(iii) its competence to hold together societies and maintain their structure; and

(iv) its competence to furnish individuals with specific experiences and stimulations".

Although Nadel<sup>2</sup> is also manifestly ahistorical he has noted, albeit irregularly the expressive and instrumental aspects of religious consciousness in points (i) and (ii) respectively. To quote a more emphatic statement of these modalities:

"The phantoms formed in the human brain are necessarily, sublimates of their material life process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter along with their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life."<sup>3</sup>

Nadel, of course, seems to suggest in point (ii) that a religion that guides economic conduct where a practical of history more often demonstrates the reverse that religious values are often rationalisations of material conduct. In fact, if anything, point (iii) betrays our contention. For Nadel is affirming the conservative and system-maintaining function of

religion which only further implies its rationalising modality. Individual inferences from such analysis can only be drawn indefinitely but here our sole purpose is to identify trends in modern research and how far they measure up to a scientific understanding of the religious phenomenon.

### III

PLURALIST social science, traditionally blind to critical 'subversive' interpretations of potentially repressive social institutions moves with classical confusion through the maze of contradictory hypotheses that litter the sociology of religion. Two separate illustrations of the problems that confront it, drawn from a century apart, illuminate the range of its perspective. Max Weber,<sup>4</sup> the pluralist *par excellence* sums up the pluralist position on this difficult subject perhaps more clearly than his distracted ideological off-spring who share little of his erudition and less of his theoretical boldness and imagination.

"It is not our thesis that the specific nature of religion is a simple function of the 'social situation' of the strata which appears 'as its characteristic bearer', or that it represents the strata's ideology, or that it is a reflection of a strata's material or ideal interest situation. On the contrary, a more basic misunderstanding of the standpoint of these discussions would hardly be possible".

A small note is necessary here. Weber claims to dissociate himself, as will become clear in our exposition, from what he understands as the classical Marxist thesis on the same subject. We shall, of course, point out Weber's several deficiencies in understanding the so-called materialist argument. Meanwhile let us quote him in full.

"However incisive the social influences, economically and politically determined, may have been upon a religious ethic in a particular case, it receives its stamp primarily from religious sources, and, first of all, from the content of its enunciation and its promise. Frequently the very next generation re-interprets these enunciations and promises in a fundamental fashion. Such re-interpretations adjust the revelations to the needs of the religious community. If this occurs, then it is at least usual that religious doctrines are adjusted to religious needs. Other spheres of interest could have only a secondary influence; often, however, such influence is very obvious and sometimes it is decisive.

For every religion we shall find that a change in the socially decisive strata has usually been of profound importance. On the other hand, the type of a religion, once stamped, has usually exerted a rather far-reaching influence upon the life conduct of very heterogeneous strata. In various ways people have sought to interpret the connection between religious ethics and interest situations in such a way that the former appear as mere 'functions' of the latter. Such interpretation occurs in so-called Historical Materialism—which we shall not here discuss—as well as in a purely psychological sense."

Our criticism of this passage is on several scores. Firstly we wonder what Weber means when he tells us that religion receives its 'stamp' from 'religious



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Secondly how does Weber justify his rejection of economic and political forces as significant when he finds their influence 'decisive' sometimes in the very same breath? Unless pluralism implies maintaining contradictory positions simultaneously it is hard to understand or explain such irresolute resolutions. Current-day pluralism is certainly more subtle and self-conscious, though unfortunately less radical. An examination of a recent paper by Peter Berger and T. Luckmann's entitled 'sociology of religion and sociology of knowledge' rediscovers the essence of sociological pluralism anew for us. Arguing persuasively for a re-interpretation of the focus of a sociology of religion, they define their sociological task thus:

"Quite naturally this task will include the analysis of both the institutionalised and the non-institutionalised aspects of this apparatus. This will involve the sociology of religion in the study of religion in the sense in which this term is commonly understood in Western civilisation (that is, as a Christian or Jewish interpretation of the world and of human destiny). But the sociology of religion will also have to deal with other legitimising systems, whether one wishes to call them religious or pseudo-religious, that are increasingly important in a secularised society (such as scientism, psychologism, communism and so forth)."

Apart from the reference to Western Civilisation which we will pass over in silence, it is interesting to note the 'religious' interpretation of 'communism'. No language can be clearer than this perverse equation through which these distinguished sociologists succumb to a popular ideological pressure that sees a theology in the material philosophy of history, of the cultural exchange between science and ideology that has subverted sociological analysis at its crucial turning points. A sociology of 'communism' which extends to Marxism as a social science is well possible; but a sociology of communism that is *ipso facto* a sociology of religion defers the senses. Our point is made clearer in the following passage:

"What results can be expected from this re-interpretation of the task of the sociology of religion of empirical research? First of all, such a re-interpretation leads to a detachment of the sociologist (*qua* sociologist, that is) from the ideological interests of all, not only of the traditional religious legitimating systems. This includes an emancipation from the 'management' point of view within the churches, and also from any scientific ideology that may exist within the field of sociology itself. In terms of research practice, there will be an obvious broadening in scope of the sociology of religion. This broader scope is especially important in a modern pluralistic society in which different legitimising systems compete for the allegiance of potential consumers of *Weltanschauung*. Indeed, we strongly believe that this market character of legitimating systems is itself an important characteristic deserving of sociological analysis: The sociology of religion here finds itself in close proximity to the problems already investigated by the sociology of mass culture and mass communications."

The motivation, as usual, is commendable, but the methodology is low. We are not convinced that the

authors have rid themselves of certain very powerful 'management' points of view; indeed it is their 'detachment' and 'emancipation' that is a matter of question. If anything, the 'market character' of sociology itself as a 'legitimating' system comes to mind. And fables about the 'modern pluralist society' do little to lull our lurking suspicions. If this is academic soft-sell, then indeed we are not buying. The sociology of religion does not by any fluke of imagination become the sociology of knowledge, at least under the scheme presented by Messrs. Berger and Luckmann; it more probably serves to confuse the latter, as well.

In a sense few of the sociologists commenting on religion ever come to grips with its content or its relevance for social science. Concerning themselves entirely with the symbolic expressive and ritualistic form of the religious experience which is indeed incandescent for the believer, they miss, to borrow a famous phrase, the rational kernel within the mystical shell, namely the relevance of institutionalised religion in a hierarchical unequal, class society where material shackles go hand in hand with intellectual bondage. Few, indeed, perceive the delicate linkage between religion and repression, or for that matter, secularism and socialism. For the purposes of our paper only these two equations stand the test of historical society. But before unburden ourselves with the weight of the problem hand it is only fair to refer to one sociologist of religion who comes closest to a true appreciation of the content of the matter. B.R. Wilson<sup>6</sup> in a perceptive, if always consistent, paper entitled 'Religion in a secular society' makes the following observation that is remarkably proximate to the terms of our own analysis:

"The whole significance of the secularising process is that society does not, in the modern world, derive its values from certain religious preconceptions which are then the basis for social organisation and social action. It is rather that...religion will...merely reflect the values which stem from social organisation itself."

#### IV

THE first premise with which we shall proceed to reorganise the sociology of religion is the so-called 'material' premise of society that religion or other ideations reflect the values of social organisation and are thereby to some extent "derived" from it. A premise, which may indeed be validated in any ideological study of social history, itself leads to a radical transformation of the terms of analysis. Instead of reading secular history in religious terms, as has often been done, one converts religious problems into secular ones. In other words instead of making concrete obscure, as distinguished sociologists of religion are wont to, we make the obscure concrete. There is therefore instantly no sociology of secularism, for religion is secularism or, at least, should be so, leaving with a religion that is not sociology and a sociology that is no religion.

The context of history, like nature, is changing. The content of class-dominated, hierarchical society is in flux. These are two further premises which are verifiable empirically. In the social conflict into which classes enter quite indispensably, religion is not a divine mediator, the kingdom of heaven where



are reconciled despite their inimical contradictions. Ideologically the religious mythology that is built around the religious value, which is quite explicit, represents the obscurest conceptualisations known to man embodying the infinite pluralism that makes ideological hegemony over the subject-classes one of the simplest and most fundamental functions of the ruling class next to material exploitation itself. To quote a famous passage:

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it."

The relevance for any sociology of knowledge of such a perspective is clear and unambiguous. All values must be related to interests to discover their social potency and efficacy. On the other hand it is indeed relevant to point out that values may well be 'studied' in several other dimensions. It would be absurd to deny the social aesthetics so evident in constellations of myth and symbolic systems of ritual—indeed some truly glorious insights have been provided for us by the genius of Claude Levi Strauss in this direction—but it would be equally misguided not to remember that this creativity is the beautiful but sad product of social and human alienation, itself a function of a repressive social history that has been the lot of mankind. In the multi-functionality of social institutions, which is all too familiar to the student of society and which may always be taken as given, it is the social or critical function that must be discovered through its historical development always in relation to the part it plays in a hierarchical society vis-a-vis the balance of social forces. Such an effort is only possible, however, when there is a genuine commitment to science; if the sole motivation be the consecration of the myth itself, then, of course we must depart from terrestrial science into the magic world of the perfumed garden and the plumed serpent.

### V

We have seen how sociology must be secularism.

We now demonstrate how secularism is socialism. In the first place if religion is alienated existence, and if this alienated existence springs from a determinedly repressive social order then the clues to a solution of our problem are revealed. Our task must then be the elimination of the repressive society, the dispossession of the very same interests which maintain alienation and support the religious illusion. The socialisation of the means of production and the annihilation of all classes and class-conflict must necessarily deprive such value-systems of their legitimating instrumentality (their class-content) while also removing the source of all mystification (class-domination), the activity of alienation. With the annihilation of the material activity of alienation (the source) and the class-content of religious ideology (the rationale), value and belief can fall back only upon the individual, personal consciousness as a

diverting, if profound, phenomenon. The relevance for secularism is here. Consciousness has always been a social product, and when consciousness is not mediated by alienated abstractions but is appreciative of true existence, there the seeds of secularism are laid. Socialism and secularism are, therefore indivisible and inseparable, in history. All talk of secularism interpreted as 'tolerance' for religion, or as the separation, formally, of the 'state' from the 'church' can only be hash of the kind that the ruling classes never tire of repeating and only a society sound asleep on such sedation is likely to swallow such feeble interpretations. In any case, all talk of secularism without the material pre-condition of socialism can only remain hollow and inane.

It is more than interesting to notice how radically the popular usage of the term differs from our definition. Ordinarily, to be multi-religious is to be secular. Nothing, of course could be further from the truth, as we conceive it. It is certainly a secular society that guarantees personal belief and conscience; but that society is less than secular which also guarantees flourishing 'religious' establishments with their own private economics and administration and political aspirations. The co-existence of religious institutions is religious pluralism, not, as is commonly understood, secularism. Quite naturally, there is more than mere semantic confusion to this: as long as the particular interests of a particular class are interpreted as the general interests of society as a whole, such ideological confusion is likely to remain. This paper on that score, is aimed at the heart of such ideology: a warning to those who would see a sociology in religion that theirs is a sociology of mystification, an exercise, however passionate, in obscurity.

The task of a radical sociology in this country has only just begun but the perspective is clear: sociology, socialism and secularism are one and the same part of a social science that must be both theory and practice in its motive of emancipation. A true sociology must aim at the reversal of institutionalised ignorance so as to 'study the structure of social oppression, and to bring this knowledge, and the power that it conveys, to the powerless and exploited social majority... the theoretical models that service an unjust *status quo* cannot also serve the effort to understand the social process, its governing relations, and the measures necessary to revolutionize them.'

In our sociology of secularism, we have moved away, however modestly, from the theoretical models that service repression.

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miseries, it destroys the illusory frontiers across which men in a feudal society dumped their unrealisable dreams and their crimes.

Even today, for a great part of India, the main existential medium is religion. Religion is still the greatest of all contradictions, a paradox made of all the beauty of dreams, all the crudity or reality, common language, curiously, of both conservatives and radicals; it is dissent and also suppression; it is the excuse of all creativity and all crime.

### III

THE mix of politics with religion had a very complicated history in our country—made up of misunderstandings, deliberate wickedness, lack of farsight and the normal share of ironies of history. Before British rule, India had two main religions existing though their relation had not been exactly sweet. The British colonialists complicated the picture, because they brought not merely their merchandise, but also a religion to sell. In the nineteenth century, when a nationalist culture started coming up, it often used religion as a symbol of national identity, partly because some of the nationalist leaders were themselves religious. Partly, of course, they were not to blame. The whole of previous history had been thoroughly religified, for through the greater part of Indian history religion was the medium of the people's existence; so, also, of their thought. The nationalist culture was, in one sense, a break with this religious tradition; it was not in another. The Hindu religion was used extensively in their writings. But, mostly, the Hindu religion was used to provide symbols, excuses for being proud, though present circumstances supplied very weak grounds for national pride. Usually the nationalist writers played up a proud Indian past against the European present, and restored an illusory sense of equality of absurdly disjointed temporal elements: a past balancing a present.

The religion in it was sometimes so rarified, it was hardly religion. It almost turned into a symbolic personal secular ethics, with God to provide logical support at the more vulnerable points. His main function was to help purely nationalist propaganda—a most unusual demand on His capacities. But this religification of the initial nationalist culture was to have very mixed results—completely unforeseen by the forerunners. It generated two opposite responses among the Hindus, the larger community. One side, the more conservative, responded with a vehement revivalism of the Hindu culture. Originally its main thrust was to be against Christianity, or what they considered a dilution of Hinduism by the Brahmos by large doses of Christianity.

There was another trend, wiser, and as it turned out, far more effective. They realised that fighting against the Brahmos movement would mean alienating some of the Brahmos of India. It was better therefore to internalise the Brahmos movement in Bengal was also internalized by the aggressive tolerance of Hinduism—its powerful system historically perfected, of internalising every troublesome opposition, by conceding the minor points. Apparent it looked like a triumph of Hindu nationalism; actual

## FOR A SECULAR SOCIETY

SUDIPTA KAVIRAJ

### I

IN the sense of a feudal society, its substitute knowledge, its only idiom; till the coming of a society, not a part of life, its totality. The society lived it; it was the medium of its existence; lived through its symbols, hated through its thought in its language. Religion was the contradiction; the justification of enjoyment and the language for dissent and oppression, the eloquence of the feudal society's anti-religiosity—of the secularism and anti-religiosity—of the hope—is a fairly recent phenomenon. In where it has gone a long way, it is only four years old; in India, about a century. Of there are important dissimilarities between the process of secularisation in Europe and in the basic logic is much the same: dereligionisation of social relationships, displacement of metaphysical ways of thought by a more scientific replacement of a psychology which started by one that starts with doubt. For modern secularism is based on scientific modes of behaviour, explicitly counter-religious.

In India, the process of secularisation has not been started. Rather it has been started at one level not the other. Secularism has been extended to the political structures in India, not to the hegemonic social structures. The problem is further complicated because different regions are at different stages of social development.

### II

RELIGION usually goes on at two levels, the level of concrete reality—the transition from religious relationships to the capitalist relationships. Each nexus—a very important and very incomplete step towards human liberation; from decentering the integral totality of an alienating structure, to the structures which are fragmented; from isolation of units to inter-related productive structures. It is also a transition on the level of hegemonic systems, cultural symbols—the symbols we use to express our expectations, our grief. In India, we have only a mixed picture of the recession of religion. It has been receding on mostly the level of the hegemonic system, pushed out by the coercive scientization of the feudal society, the subversion of feudal values, the other world—the dumping ground of all grievances, and unrealized dreams. Industrialisation suddenly realise that we live in finite terms; we are conscious of the edges of our hopes and



and the nationalist cause beyond repair. The nationalist movement was not a movement in terms of its causes and its message. It only used religious symbols incidentally to make its message more effective. Unfortunately, the main factor was to push more basic factors to the foreground, later on. It was a movement against the imperialist structure—economic and social—and political injustice—it grew out of the imperiousness of the whole imperialist situation. It aimed at an equal society, which was also to be an equal society for some, though not for others. It had only religious cultural symbols as a convenient short-cut which provided the excuse to its enemies for calling it a religious movement, a version of its meaning.

There was, the Muslim opposition to the nationalist movement was to benefit from this Hindu twist given to the movement. The Muslim separatists more than anyone else, this was a misunderstanding, confusing the nationalist movement with a movement of only the Hindu community. Some have blamed it on unfortunate circumstances; actually, the circumstances were favourable. Of course, the Brahmo reformers used primitive Indian scriptures, but more as a political ethics, less as a religion. Tilak, much more, also used religious symbols and religious language which led some historians to condemn him as a nationalist. It was, to say the least, a very harsh judgement, probably unhistorical. Certainly these people believed in religion, probably they also used it to carry its message. But to them religion was little more than the code they thought would be most intelligible to the people they were talking to.

There was also, at a deeper level, a real historical reason. The nationalist movement could start from the masses but could not end with them. The masses did not know the foreign language—English. They could not read the new thought still less. It could be put only in their own idiom of thought, and the symbols they knew, the thought structures were familiar with. For this reason, the Indian nationalist British colonialism was for long very split. For the common people, carefully kept away from the spread of English education, it meant a feudal opposition, for the educated mainly a liberal one. The majority of the common people were Hindus, and they accused the British for taking up the old village, threatening the old values, in short, for the unintentional services they were doing for the Indian society. The elite who were educated turned against them on the coming of industrialisation had spread, but that was not spread enough. It was primarily a moderate opposition. Later, it was to split the elite itself into two camps. One section wanted to make the masses repent by revealing the inadequacies of their liberalism. For them, the people did not matter; they scoffed at their backwardness, and had a touching faith that nationalisation would come primarily by intellectual pressures, and not any help from the masses. The "extremists" were called because they were more level-headed—were not sceptical about British susceptibility to pure

reason. So, naturally the masses figured quite largely in their plans for freedom. The elite had to speak to the masses; to do that it had to speak religion, religion mostly of the majority. This alienated the minority, which thought it was not their movement. This was the tragedy not merely with Tilak, but also with Gandhi. He used the song '*Ragupathi Raghava Rajaram*'. After independence, India was to become a 'Ramrajya'. Of course he believed it also included the Muslims, but it was easy for others to create the illusion that it did not. For the symbols were all Hindu.

Perhaps there were also other sociological reasons for the Muslim alienation from the nationalist movement. Muslims were a curiously mixed community, with polar economic contrasts, from the very aristocratic levels in the U.P. to the low depths of poverty in Bengal—mostly converts from Hindu oppression of lower castes. Most of the leaders of the nationalist movement, who had become its symbols were Hindus—Tilak, Surendra Nath Bannerjee, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, Gandhi and Nehru. The Muslims thought themselves under-represented.

#### IV.

THE Muslims were a minority, but that they were an oppressed minority was a fairly recent discovery. In a sense, of course, they were oppressed, just as the other sections of the people—by the British. There were in fact, two contradictions at the historical moment: the contradiction, above all else, between British imperialism and the Indian people; there was also, the one between the Indian rich and the Indian poor, both Hindus and Muslims. The theory that the main contradiction was between the two great communities was invented by the separatist intelligentsia, with large doses of British help. To a large extent the British did not find the religious problem, as they pretended; they created it. British historians cited examples of communal disharmony existing in previous Indian history. It was certainly true that there had been conflicts between the communities, but equally certainly, the communities had lived in peace for long spells. Really the British administrators were less innocent than their historians made out.

Sometimes they asked the innocent question: what would the British gain out of it? After all, it would only make their stay more troublesome. Actually, however, communalism, at least in that form, was hardly such a problem in the earlier stretches of British rule. It comes up only when their rule had itself become rather shaky. Obviously, there was no shortage of motives on their part. Despite appearances, communal conflict actually made their administration easier. When they wanted to crack down on one part of the society, it made sure that they had the other part on their side. Grievances were not in short supply in the later phase of British rule in India. Communalism served as a beautiful mechanism for deflecting most of them away from the British. Henceforth, Hindus would blame their troubles on the Muslims, and vice versa, and the British could act as the saviours in either case.

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ment could play on their apprehensions more. Of course, the Muslim masses stood to gain nothing out of this apprehension about an independence which was still nowhere near, anyway, though their professional intelligentsia and businessmen thought they had—making a rather untenable generalization from their own material calculations. British administrators, not always the brightest of men, played on this fear with a skill bordering on a fine art.

For the British, the communal split served more important historical purposes, too. Primarily, it blurred the sense of the basic historical contradiction. This was between the English imperialists and the Indians. But it was made to look as if it was between the Hindus and Muslims, or, at least, a triangular contest. It sent the historical schedule wrong, in consequence. The internal conflict was to be decided first; the British could wait. Some started finding in the British a most valuable ally in the new communal conflict just as the government had expected. So the British could once more play the role of the balancer of the balance. This was the great inversion. The horizontal difference became more significant than the vertical structuring of the society. It turned the struggle against real oppression into one against a mostly imagined oppression: friends became enemies, enemies became friends; the ally became the only target of hatred.

Curiously, the man who later became the symbol of minority separatism, Jinnah, was a politician with a long record of moderation. He was also not a separatist in this sense before his disastrous political experience in the thirties. The Muslim League had expected exhilarating victories at the polls; it was snowed under instead, worst of all, in the provinces where Muslims were in a majority. It is only a matter of guess what exactly made Jinnah so bitterly anti-Congress. Perhaps it was a sense of personal frustration, perhaps an intellectual conviction that statism, or its Congress version, was misplaced in India. Previously, he had tried to collaborate with the Congress; from the forties it became his main target of attack. Perhaps personal factors were also, to a certain extent, involved; but it was more than just a play of personalities: Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru. In a sense, Congress itself was also to blame. It accepted Gandhi's use of Hindu symbols. Theoretically, this was quite vulnerable, as Nehru felt quite clearly, though it paid dividends in practice. It made it look like a movement of the majority; not a movement for all.

In a way, of course, the only distinction of the day was between people who were more religious and others who were less. It was not between the religious and the secular. There were only a few like Nehru who considered nationalism really secular and thought of it in an historical, not an emotional context. Gandhi had a very mixed sense of history—in certain respects fantastically right, in others equally wrong. He was above all, correct about the present—the present of the nationalist movement. But all his expectations about the future went wrong. He expected it to be more or less a replica of the past, of course, minus its less noble sides. This was a totally unhistorical view. He wanted the

society to be refeudal, instead of capitalist—usually suggested by his peculiar use of the term 'socialism'. He wanted the new society to turn its back towards industrialism. He wished the wealthy to be trustees instead of capitalists. In all this, he committed a double mistake. First, all this was expressed in a typical Hindu idiom of thought. More basically, of course, it was historically mistaken.

V

OSTENSIBLY, this was the spiritual reason for development of an 'alternative' nationalism among Muslims in reality, there were more tangible inspirations, also. The main originators of the separatist plan were, not naturally, Muslims of the superannuated aristocracy who were the first to feel the sufferings of a minority. In reality, they badly suffered all the advantages of the capitalism constructed by the British, just as the Hindu right had done. They revolted under British auspices against the still anticipated Hindu oppression. In long run, this 'oppression' turned into a vested interest. And everytime it showed signs of slackening, it kept up by timely atrocities committed by fictitious Hindus on fictitious Muslims, and naturally, also versa.

The Pakistan proposal—the first concrete towards partition—had a curious history. Perhaps first it was more a slogan than a concrete proposal. At least, Jinnah personally seemed unsure about he actually meant by it. Some believe that his long-standing plan quite precisely worked out in his mind before he went into action. This seems a made up too neatly through retrospective reconstruction. More probably, he picked up the opportunity as they came, and tried to fit them into a pattern. Of course, this is a purely theoretical difference, if it existed. Historical figures are not judged by they intended to do, but what they actually did. Jinnah's mode of action radically differed from Gandhi's. Jinnah was the constitutionalist, depended on direct action, though he always backed after a point. Jinnah worked mostly against the British, Gandhi mostly against them, though of agreeing to ultimate consultations. It is probable the Pakistan proposal was at first merely an error to be filled up with political afterthought. The proposal caught on among the Muslims for reasons. It became popular among the Muslims because it offered not merely the spiritual satisfaction of living in a country of their own religion but also to offer more material satisfactions; it was a pre-emptive market to the industrialists, a bureaucracy, government and power-roles as incentives. Congress, howsoever much it resented communal turn in politics, could not get the primeval dilemma; if it spoke the religious language it could reach the masses but could not be seen as going totally secular, it would not, some people perhaps reach the masses. So mostly, it was a vague policy to avoid uncomfortable decisions in regard.

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The Pakistan proposals were posed in early forties but not concretised until 1946. Jinnah and Congress both were content to leave it alone, though



opposite reasons. Congress perhaps wanted to kill it by silence; or thought the later it was concretised the better. Jinnah left it vague to make the maximum out of it when the time came. But the essential British design was secured when they invited not merely Gandhi but also Jinnah for talks. It seemed to prove that the Congress was not the only organization from the exploiters to judges between two conflicting communities. The British were the most elusive number in this game. Their talks with the Congress were always across the conference table, with impeccable formality; with Jinnah they preferred backstage consultations. So, when the first draft of the Mountbatten proposals came Nehru reacted violently against it, although British historians have expressed surprise at this reaction.

The conjuncture of independence was, after all, a very mixed one for everyone, except perhaps for Jinnah. In the elaborate game of deception the British played, nobody got what they wanted. The Congress got independence, after a long struggle, but not the one they had wanted. There was a bitter irony. The India they freed in 1947 was not the India they had fought for. The British were, anyway the losing side; they naturally wanted to save as much as they could from the wreck. They received the psychological satisfaction of truncating Indian independence, a sort of perverse victory within a defeat. More basically they had the material satisfaction of salvaging their commercial interests from a total wreck, a tremendous success in colonial relations. Probably, the League came out the happiest; at least, so it seemed to them at the time, though, it was to look quite different twentyfive years afterwards. The League had fought less for independence, more for partition. They were content to leave those inessential to the Congress. They were also the side who came closest to getting what they wanted.

To some, for this reason, independence looked more like a failure. It was the defeat of a hope, a disappointment with history. Some, still relieved the pain twenty years afterwards. Of course, this subversion has been overcome with the liberation of Bangladesh—though at a fantastic human cost for a second time.

## VI

PHILOSOPHICALLY, the question of the present of secularism leads on to its future. Historically, intellectual systems have passed through three stages; first, when religion controlled both public and private behaviour, second, a dualism under which religion could operate in private but no longer controlled public policy; there may also be a third stage when there will be another totalisation, public and private affairs being both secular. After independence, Pakistan, true to its main inspiration, went for a religious state. There was an instinctive reaction among the conservatives in India for replying to this by making India also a religious state. Congress, of course, opted for a secular state.

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There have been two kinds of problems in post-independence India about the linkage between religion and politics. A section of politicians put conscious pressure to subvert the secular principle. Their efforts succeeded most in north India where Jana Sangh came out as a major political force. It had two reasons. It cashed on the failures of Congress policy and exploited the general anti-Congress feeling. It also appealed to the religious hatred of people living in multi-religious or more exactly, bireligious areas, and also, though marginally, to the feelings of the refugees. The success of Jana Sangh was built on contradictory grounds. They used mainly economic and social grievances, but gave them a religious twist. Of course when accused of being communal, they vehemently protested their innocence. But the content of their policy, despite protestations, remained intensely communal, and historically reactionary.

There is, however, another type of problem. The structure of a secular state does not operate in a vacuum. So the simple-minded who thought that the struggle for a secular democracy was won when they were entered into the constitution, were mistaken. The secular structure was imposed on a civil society which was still extremely religised, a result of the inadequate capitalism which made compromises with feudal interests and feudal values. After independence, a section of the Hindus believed that in fact India was a Hindu State, though the government was not admitting it out of politeness. The state remained unreconciled to the civil society, in a large part. And we had a curiously schizophrenic atmosphere in which cow slaughter is sought to be prohibited not for the general prevention of cruelty to animals (which is a secular attitude) but for the high status-position the cow enjoys in Hindu mythology; officially secular ministers made clandestine visits to astrologers.

A secular state cannot become a reality until a society is itself secularised. Secularism is not becoming multi-religious; just becoming tolerant towards the other man's religion. Just as religious secularization is also a way of life, a totality. So people would not like to break with religion too because religion performed in history a very important suppressive function. And religious suppression more effective than secular suppression, suppresses without decorations, minus the mystificatory atmosphere. In religion, the suppressive human relations are transmuted into a relation with a human point on one end and a superhuman point on the other. changes even the terminology of social oppression is no longer a suppression; it is a submission to something outside human control. So religion would attribute human suffering to reasons outside the human world.

Conservatives have tried to bring the religious mentality into politics, because the whole mental structure fostered by religion is irrational and counter-operational. And the relation between religious mentality and revolution is usually inverse. So the religious mental structures were eminently suited for an atavistic function in an unequal and oppressive society. Religion creates a substitute world, a counter-re-



an unreal world which is more real to the believer, as a completion to this incomplete world, as a referent to this meaningless reality. Against history, it sets up a counter-history, against experience an illusory counter-experience. It changes the meaning of everything human, for it implies that there is a meaning beyond this meaning.

The rationalist mentality, by contrast, is a creatively self-negating, self-subverting structure of thought. For it, every fundamental is a provisional fundamental, every absolute is merely a relative absolute. A critical philosophy would not take for granted any social structure, like logical certainties. So every conservative system tends to be theological. In an inadequate capitalism the temptation is naturally great for pressing feudal habits and thought-modes also into the service of a repressive society.

Secularism in society is also a rupture, a break with the past, though it is less often appreciated. In a sense, it is easier to say what the secular society is not. It is not just a change from a coercively religious society to a multi-religious society, or from a society in which religion is imposed to one where religion is tolerated. Secularism as a political ideal does not imply the rationalization of social relations, or relationships becoming fully human. It is a society in which a negative principle is established. The state is not controlled by religion, state and social relations are secular. Religion is privatised. And in a country where only a few years ago religion at least in politics, meant hating the other religion, it may sometimes mean the very inadequate progress of the privatization of hate.

## VII

BUT there is a very important difference between dereligionization of the society in Europe and in our country. In Europe, secularization progressed along with the more apparent implications of the economic and social transformations in capitalism. It was a clean break, perhaps because it was stretched over a long time. Here, like everything else, secularism had its stages foreshortened. So it appeared sometimes as if it came to an unprepared society. So the strategy of secularism has also to be different in our underdeveloped conditions. While in Europe it was primarily an unguided evolution, here it has to be a conscious drive. There religion ebbed out so gradually it was difficult to locate a point in time when it became unimportant. Here it has to be suddenly eroded, instead.

One implication of the secular argument is usually underplayed. Secularism is a structural problem, not a psychological one, as is often made out. The village usurer will naturally use religion as support to his position and find elaborate religious rationalisations of his exploitation. The capitalist—mostly a historically amended version of the same usurer—would also use it to find excuses for himself. At least, he would find that religion offers a less explosive pastime for his workers than trade unionism. The chances are that if they take religion seriously then the usual

conflict would be between the communities, instead of between him and them. Of course, he would prefer a divided working class to a united one. These forces would be interested in making religion stay a little longer, though the capitalist would also join the usual secular rituals. All this makes the fight for secularism a problem of changing exploitative structures, not just altering mass psychology.

Historically, of course, erosion of religion would not end here, the halfway station of a secular state, in this undecided dualist sense. It will be a total negation of religion, a dereligionised society. It will be a break with the past—not a sudden jerking break, but rather a disengagement from religious habits of thought, and behaviour, a slow breakaway from the accumulated weight of centuries, of things taken for granted for over thousands of years. The basis of religious thought is faith; taking things for granted unless they are proved wrong. It is essentially conservative. The basis of secular thought is questioning; doubting things unless they are proved right. It is essentially subversive. This is the inversion in hegemonic thought-patterns which would be the logical end of dereligionization of society and thought. Political secularism can hardly succeed without the dereligionization of the hegemonic culture. For that is not merely suspension of hatred for the other man's religion; it is in ceasing to think through religion. It is not equal to toleration for religion; though that is the inferior substitute possible in a still religionised atmosphere.

In India, we have won a secular state, but the programme of dereligionization has not been taken up yet. In fact, it is felt that religion is too strong yet to take up that programme. In a sense, we have not broken with religion; we have only bought our peace. We tolerate religion in spite of its being anti-rational and anti-human; it tolerates political secularism in exchange. Sometimes, it almost seems a secularism ashamed of itself. Fundamentally, the logic of secularism is also a logic of socialist humanism. The secular logic is against religion because it divided men into unnecessarily further groupings; it set men against other men; it made one set of men oppress another set. It is against this division, this hatred and, on a more subtle level, also against the exploitative structures. The end point of this secular-human logic would lead to a time when men would be glad to lose all surplus identities; these would be superfluous, only distractions. Everything that abridges humanity would be impossible; and everything that pretends to add anything to it ridiculous. For you cannot really add to it. A really human society would have to be an equal society, not a society in which equality has to be proved through litigation, but where it is lived. Throughout history, human relationships have become more simplified. The history of men has been, in a sense, the history of their becoming just human.

Logically, the fully secular society would be one in which every man would be worth every other man. When men would lose all other identities except the human.

SECULAR DEMOCRACY



# SECULARISM: WESTERN AND INDIAN

S. ALAM KHUNDMIRI

## I

A striking difference between western secularism and Indian secularism is the fact that in the former case it has become a fact of life, a result of long historical process of secularisation of the modes of life and thought, and in the case of India it is an ideal or a value to be realised, which involves, at the intellectual level a considerable break with the past, and at the political level, a patient and conscious nurturing of institutions which could promote and preserve its spirit. If in the West it is powerful, and one of the decisive forces of its culture, in Indian life it has become a

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forceful ideal which has started gathering around a cluster of values and attitudes which would, definitely, determine the future course of events and the direction of history.

If the political decisions of the people have any meaning, which they undoubtedly have then it can be said that the idea, at least its political variant, has taken deep roots in the minds of Indian people. It has become a 'passion' with them. It can safely be called an irreversible decision of the Indian people and a constructive force, or a useful agent in history unless it is organised and is able to influence the cognitive and the volitional moulds of the people. It may generate a system of ideas and a set of values for mediation between the ideal and reality. That is what happened in the West during the last five hundred years of its history.

It will be a partial analysis of the contemporary Indian situation if it is urged that the Indian decision is concerned only with the political aspect of the concept of secularism, namely to divorce politics from religion—the principle of Church-State separation in the Western context. The two other components of the situation are the passions for democracy and socialism, which marks a complete change in the psychological make-up of the Indian people. Speaking in the Indian traditional context, it implies that the passion to establish a 'dharmic' society, in which the emphasis must be on action motivated by a consciousness of duty prescribed by 'dharma', has been—at least unconsciously—abandoned and is replaced by an opposite passion for establishing a 'Kingdom of Rights' which will be guided more by 'instrumental values' rather than 'eternal values'. The coalescence of the three ideal secularism, socialism and democracy—has made the Indian situation dynamic. It will not be possible to check, by a mere effort of will, the flowing over the consequences of the actualisation of the three into one another. In other words, it will not be possible to restrict secularism to only one aspect, separation of politics from religion, and to avoid the total consequences of secularisation.

If ideas operate only in the human head it may be possible to resist the dynamics of their movement but when the stage is the actual human history it is impossible to taste the apple without committing to it. The only thing possible is to control the consequences of the 'sin', which is implied in the idea of planning. In the Indian context it means that the changes, which occurred in the West through the operation of both unconscious forces, can be brought about by deliberate and conscious planning and the logic of the movement can be controlled. It is, however, unreasonable to assume that the entire logic of the movement can be easily controlled, the human agency being the unpredictable factor in the historical movement. The one important lesson of the aberrations which happened in the course of planning in planned societies of the contemporary epoch.

## II

As the scope of the present study is concerned with the course, it does not necessarily mean that it

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ing treated independently of their social and historical context) attention is being focussed on some concepts which seem to have led to the secularisation of the Western society and to the dominance of the idea of rationalism. It is possible that there is an element of 'priorism' in isolating a few concepts from the complex institutional framework of the Western society. It is also meant that there is a total acceptance of these concepts in the Western world; in fact, there had been considerable resistance against them since the beginning of the modern times, but the resisters have always played the role of 'outsiders', men like Pascal, Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Kafka. Those who decide to live inside the system have been within the consensual framework, with slight variations. So when this framework is concerned, the division of the Western world into the Communists and their opponents is irrelevant, as the difference between these two groups are less significant compared to their differences with the pre-modern world of the Asian East and the African West.

The three concepts, isolated here, which led to the transformation of the medieval Western society into a complex secularised world are the following:

(A) *The principle of rationalism and an uncompromising faith in the adequacy of human reason:* that it is adequate not only to unravel the mysteries of existence but also to guide man in his historical existence. The people does not deny the finitude of the existing human reason but believes that man overcomes this finitude in the course of history in the shape of accumulated knowledge and reason. This idea introduces a concept of history in 'reason' and thus a gap is filled between absolute reason and historical reason. The idea of rationalism in this developed form has a recent origin but its basis was present in Greek thought. Hence, it is the product of renaissance which resulted in the rejection of the ecclesiastical authority as the infallible spokesman of the 'divine reason' as expressed through 'revelation'.

Aristotle, with his assumption that reason is immanent in the universe and the human world, started a new secular tradition in the Western thought. The underlying principles of this new tradition were, that the universe is intelligible, that man is rational, that man has a right to seek happiness, and that happiness consists in a life led by reason. It has to be pointed out here that Aristotle made an attempt to purge reason of the Platonic-mystic element and identified it with natural intelligence. In the medieval age this mystic element was, however, again introduced into the scope and meaning of reason, due to the influence of the mystic cults. The renaissance world-view divorced human reason from 'spirit', which was a decision of immense consequences, so far as the unimpeded process of secularisation was concerned. Reason as a middle term between the universe and man, once again, became a guiding idea of the Western world. This led to the development of the scientific spirit, and, when it was allied with the passion to conquer nature, resulted in the development of technology.

In the age of enlightenment of the Western world, the idea of reason as an agent of 'change' was further

developed by Hegel and then in the uncompromising secular philosophic outlook of Marx. Hegel's insistence that "reason terminates in freedom and freedom is the very life of human subject" led to a synthesis of reason and freedom, which found its development in Hegel's political philosophy that freedom and law have their meaning in the institutional life. This idea implied that changes in the human situation have their roots in history. This was a very important development as it rejected the medieval 'providential idea of history', still persisting in the minds of 'religious' communities.

In the philosophic outlook of Marx, this idea was further extended to the point that human consciousness was regarded as effect of social existence, i.e., the institutional life of man in history. As Marx conceived the human world along with the non-human world a dynamic dialectical process, the abovementioned assumption led to the conclusion that changes in the institutional life precede, logically as well as chronologically, changes in the human psyche. This Hegelian-Marxian idea has become an indissoluble element of the Western mind. This view regards conflict and struggle as the mechanism of change, which now means social and technological change.

Not only did this view abolish the providential view of history, it also replaced the 'divine in man' with the idea of man as a 'Prometheus' or a 'Faust'. The Promethean-Faustian image of man becomes a characteristic feature of the new 'secular humanism'. As the new society was a 'scientific-technological' one, a new and a critical contradiction arose. Man's technological reason soon surpassed his intelligence to control the forces of technology — particularly in the 'bourgeois industrial' world. This development gave a new dimension to the process of secularisation. Supremacy of reason led to the prevalence of the technical reason and values were identified with instrumental values. This situation is common to the Communist and the non-Communist worlds, with the important difference that total planning in the former reduces the possibility of inner conflict in society.

The predominance of reason and the technical reason fosters a world-view in which the religious category gets a marginal place. In the words of Harvey Cox<sup>1</sup>, 'religion survives secularisation, but what remains in the name of religion is no more than a mark of national, or ethnic identification, or, an esthetic delight'. In this situation everything that is demanded or sought has to be justified before reason and any reference to the revealed authority becomes out of tune with the times. In this process, law, politics, economics, education, culture are all bound to be secularized. The relation between religion and life creates certain tensions. There are three possible sets of relation: (a) Subservience of religion to the dominant secular world-outlook — Communist pattern, (b) Irrelevance of religion — American and Western, (c) religion as a critique of secularisation — a possibility in a democratic society which would make religion purely an 'elitist' activity. The last is the most creative function that religion can perform in a secularised culture, inviting sensitive soul to look beyond to 'Transcendence, keeping in view the transient nature' of all human achievements including the march of civilisation.



(B) *The Concept or the Principal of 'Autonomy'* is the most important principle of Western secularism. In simple terms this idea implies the centrality of man, but man is the supreme end of his actions, an idea towards which converge the various divergent forms of Western humanism, Marxian and liberal both. Like all modern ideas, it too has its origin in the Renaissance world-outlook, and has been transforming in different directions. It has its roots in the Graeco-Roman as well as the Biblical-prophetic vision of man. It was mostly on account of its two mutually opposite sources that the modern liberal humanism suffers a crisis.

The Biblical vision of man finds its 'radical interpretation' in Erich Fromm's 'radical humanism' who sums up his interpretation of the Biblical vision in such words: "The answer of the Bible and the later Jewish tradition seems to be: indeed, man is feeble and weak, but he is an open system which can develop upto a point where he is free."<sup>2</sup> This concept of autonomy found its first systematic expression in the moral philosophy of Spinoza, who declared that man's morality must be based on his nature which cannot be determined by any antecedent demands of revelation or any authority. This idea, coming at the age of industrial expansion, created a movement of thought which could not find co-existence with the ecclesiastical authority either congenial or theoretically possible. Reason had already made nature autonomous and a mere intellectual 'leap' was needed to make man moral and politically autonomous.

In the field of morality this 'Copernican revolution' was brought by Kant and in the field of politics by the British liberal thinkers, Bentham and Mill, which later developed into the secular concept of man in the world-outlook of that great iconoclast in human history, Karl Marx. The idea of man as an autonomous being implied the separation of ethics from church and now it was developing in the direction of making politics completely independent of any form of religious or sacred activity. Desacralisation becomes one of the inevitable consequences of the march of modernity or secularisation. Kant, perhaps, did not foresee this possibility of complete desacralisation of human culture as a possibility of the idea of human autonomy but the idea having been articulated in the best creative epoch of human history it could not have any other direction for further movement.

The Communist world has moved consistently into the direction of working out the implications of the idea of autonomy where religion becomes inconsistent with secularism, and the so-called liberal West tries to accommodate religion through the concept of co-existence. It is, however, clear that in a world in which technological reason is dominant, co-existence between transcendental view of the origin of reason with the technological one becomes, if not impossible at least questionable.

Technological reason makes 'common sense', or the pragmatic reason, as the ultimate criterion and in this atmosphere the man of faith too feels a need to appeal to the practical sense to justify the co-existence of religion and secularism. Just to quote one example

from the leading Roman Catholic theologian, one of the most enlightened one in the contemporary age, Jacques Maritain: "Men possessing quite different, even opposite metaphysical or religious outlooks, can converge not by virtue of any identity of doctrine, but by virtue of an analogical similitude in practical principle towards the same practical conclusions, and can still towards the same practical secular faith, provided in the same practical secular faith, provided they similarly reverse, perhaps for quite different reasons, truth and intelligence, human dignity, freedom, brotherly love, and the absolute value of man good".<sup>3</sup> Liberal society—permits Maritain to conclude that men of faith and the men of secular creed can live in the same world and share each other's experiences, and that seems to be the only possible result of the co-existence view. In the lives of common men and women, at least, co-existence does not seem to make any difference, and it is an important fact to be remembered by the secularising societies.

(C) The third, and to the present writer the most important from the philosophical point of view, concept that *Time is tangible and real, and the history implies an irreversible process*. In its most developed form this idea owes its origin to the rise of humanistic philosophies, although some contemporary thinkers like Paul Tillich<sup>4</sup> in the West and Iqbal<sup>5</sup> in the East, believe that it was rooted in the Biblical and Quranic world-views respectively. The idea of reality of Time also implies the idea of the reality of the world and its evolution in Time. The 'secular' itself has this double reference to Time: the World as opposed to Eternity and the Monistic Desacralisation, referred earlier, is a logical consequence of the process of secularisation.

It is on the basis of this idea that secularism becomes a process of man's increasing involvement in his earthly life and his concern with his present situation rather than his pre-occupation with his future which lies in eternity, beyond the world of time-space, beyond 'samsara'. It is opposed to the pre-occupation that 'moksha' or 'salvation' beyond time has no relevance for man and must become more significant in any life-order. Secular concept of life, in this sense, reverses the whole life-outlook of man and assumes a rival 'messianic' mission. It even encourages secularisation of the religious life itself, the extent of which can be found in the Western history in movements like the Levellers.

From this angle, secularism demands that the order must be organised in a manner that institutions and ideas are in tune with the demands of time. It does not necessarily mean a complete rejection of the transcendental view of time; it means, rather, an adjustment between Time and Eternity. It is identical with the so-called Epicurean attitude of getting tomorrow for the sake of the earth today; it means an evolutionary attitude which is in the continuity of the time-order. It is also in contrast with the classical Asian mystical outlook of disgust with the horror of matter, with its cycle of time which makes recurrence possible and glorification of poverty and renunciation of the world.

To sum up, the category of history is required to replace the principle of eternity. Time transcends



in history but is not swallowed by it as it happens in eternity. The development of the religious thought in the contemporary West gives us many such examples showing that it has recognised the force of the process and is adjusting itself with the contemporary outlook. It has to be admitted that religion and religious thought have not become sterile in this process of secularisation, on the contrary, the new age has opened up new possibilities for them which were never been anticipated when religion was enjoying almost exclusive authority.

### III

The development of the ideas of secularism has been on a different pattern in India. The idea was not the product of the process of actual secularisation of life, and secondly the philosophical development had been on quite different lines. Like other ideas of democracy, socialism etc., it developed as a response to the actual historic needs of the Indian society. It was adopted by the Western educated liberals who had imbibed the traditions of rationalism, positivism, and social development of the liberal West. These liberal leaders were quite conscious that on the basis of mere Indian traditions the foundations of a new order could not be laid. Indian society needed a strong 'critique' and in the scientific-humanistic thought of the West they found such a critique. It is a significant fact, which is often ignored, that the Muslim intellectuals led by Syed Ahmad Khan, did not agree with their Hindu counterparts so far as politics was concerned but there was complete theoretical agreement so far the dominant ideas of rationalism and a scientific criticism of the past were concerned. One makes a dispassionate study of the writings of these liberals, both Hindus and Muslims, one finds an echo of the principles mentioned in the earlier part of the study, as the dominant ideas of secular philosophy.

The situation, however, changed with the coming of the Nationalists on the Indian scene. The Hindu liberals were replaced by the extremists like Bal, B.P. Pal, and Shri Aurobindo, and the Muslim liberals by the young obscurantist Abul Kalam 'Azad. Rationalism was replaced by religious authority and 'present' was reduced into the past. There was a complete reversal. If Sri Aurobindo declared that Indian Nationalism was not, for him, a creed, a religion, or a faith; it was Sanatam Dharma and equated the growth of Indian Nation with Sanatan Dharma and its decline with its decline,<sup>6</sup> young Azad too in the fight against the British a revival of the spirit of Islam. Historical study of the past was replaced by romanticising of history, the nostalgic revival of the Golden Pasts, because they were different for the leaders of the two communities.

History was, however, moving against the intention of these revivers, and the great change came with the emergence of Gandhiji on the Indian scene. The second phase of Indian secularism begins with Gandhiji who represents a radical departure from the classical Indian tradition. Much attention has been focused on the religious elements of Gandhiji's politics which, though true, is only partially true. In the theoretical scheme of Gandhiji, which has to be carefully gathered from his writings and more from his actual life, the idea of the reality of Time and the

importance of the present worldly existence is forcefully implied.

Of course, he did not revive the secular tradition of the liberals in total, but he picked up the thread and made the secular process irreversible in Indian life. What happened in the West, at the last and the contemporary phase of the development of the movement of secularisation, happened in Gandhiji's life at its earliest phase i.e. the emergence of a 'religious consciousness, referred to in this study, which does not look with disfavour at the life of matter and the needs of human body, but, on the contrary, gives to them a proper and an important position in the life of man. From the point of view of pure economics—the present writer is less than a layman in this subject—Charkha might be called a retrograde step, but it was a symbol of the secularising process. No more was the repeating of the divine name on a rosary a holy deed for Gandhiji, the spinning wheel had taken its place. It was in a sense the beginning of the desecralisation process.

Gandhiji started his political life in India with leading a textile workers' strike at Ahmedabad<sup>7</sup> in which the new weapon of Satyagrah was used, for the amelioration of the workers' earthly life, and not for their 'moksha'. True, he founded Ashrams, but they were less concerned with the religious life of man, as this term is understood in the Eastern religious tradition. They were more like training centres for the social workers. In his last phase the 'bhangi colony' had become his 'ashram' which suggests that Gandhiji was more interested in secularising the religious life, rather than in 'religionising' the earthly life of man. Again his fight for the Harijans was not based on a deep study of the Hindu doctrine, he was much more moved by the concept of the 'rights of man', whatever might be his political considerations in this matter.

To turn one's attention to the theoretical assumptions of Gandhiji, one finds a very significant secular element (in the philosophical sense of the term)—the supremacy of ethics over spirituality. Spirituality, particularly its Indian variety, is least concerned with ethical principles. Gandhiji's insistence on a proper relationship between the ends and the means did not have so much religious significance as his quest for a Universalist ethics. The category employed by him is purely ethical and has nothing to do with ritualistic and institutional religion. Gandhiji was the greatest anti-mystical religious man of India. The seeds of the ideas of autonomy and the significance of Time are present in Gandhiji's theoretical outlook.

His passion for communal unity belongs to a different category compared to his contemporary Mr. Jinnah of the Lucknow pact. Gandhiji based his creed of communal unity on his ethical doctrine of plurality, a direct outcome of applying reason to religion. The truly religious would look with suspicion at the Gandhian insistence on the equal relevance of all religions, because it goes counter to a very important principle of religious consciousness, i.e. the principle of finality. Gandhiji seems to be more interested in the pragmatic and the practical aspect of the problem of the plurality of religions than the purely intellectual consideration of the matter.<sup>8</sup> A humanistic ethical



doctrine would not be bothered about the problem of the final salvation of man in spiritual terms; he will be more interested in the practical outcome of a religious dogma on actual historical human life. This humanistic approach is discernible in Gandhiji's approach. When he made an appeal for the complete separation of institutional politics from institutional religion, he appealed more as an ethical person than a mystic, who also eventually agrees for the separation because he thinks that matter defiles the spirit. Gandhiji was being led by the idea of autonomy in his practical secular outlook, i.e. separation of politics from religion.

The main idea of the above analysis is to suggest that Gandhiji did not look at secularism and secularisation as two unrelated matters. The analysts often emphasise the difference and even the opposition of the respective political idioms of Gandhi and Nehru, and this emphasis definitely proves that Nehru had a better appreciation of the logic of secularism than Gandhi. I do not contest the view that Nehru was more consistent in his attitude towards secularism, but what is being suggested here is that the basic philosophic attitude of Nehru was not fundamentally different from Gandhiji's ethical concern. Nehru, while he shared the assumptions of humanistic ethics with Gandhiji, believed that for a proper flowering of the humanistic ethics a scientific culture is also required. In Nehru's political thought and practice the principles of secularism get perfect articulation. From Gandhiji's 'Charkha' to Nehru's 'heavy machine' a long distance is covered but both are the symbols of secularisation. There is much more common between them than between a mystic's rosary and the 'Charkha'. Gandhiji paved the way for Nehru's consistent approach to secularism and secularisation.

Gandhiji brought India from the ocean of eternity to the sands of history and Nehru made the most tremendous effort to bring India at the threshold of the modern age. India is now on the way to modernisation—one may also call it Westernisation, which has not become an irreversible process. The problem which contemporary India faces is spiritual. Can India escape the consequences of the excesses of secularisation, whether it is of West European variety or that of the Communist type? Perhaps the Gandhian vision can serve as a corrective.

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# SECULARISATION

## Retrospect and Prospect

BIPIN CHANDRA

### I

THE colonialisation of the Indian economy, society and polity produced many-sided consequences. One was the initiation of the prolonged historical process of welding the Indian people into a nation. Another was the rise of a national, anti-imperialist movement as the central contradiction between imperialism and the interests of the Indian people.

The national movement was based on the phenomenon of the nation-in-the-making while it was itself a powerful factor contributing to this phenomenon. Its growing strength depended in part on the extent to which the people became conscious of their being part of a nation whose essential interests required a struggle for the overthrow of imperialism. This consciousness of nationhood - of being a people - did not, however, flow automatically from the objective reality. It had to be a hard, painstaking process in self-discovery in which the anti-imperialist struggle itself would play a crucial role.

But by its very nature, the process of the nation-in-the-making was, and is, a highly differential process. Moreover, the formation of new social classes and strata and the impact of imperialism on the people also occurred in a differential manner leading to the emergence of a varied relationship between imperialism and the different sections of the Indian society. This resulted in the extremely uneven development, both in time and space, of national and anti-imperialist consciousness among different social classes and strata as well as people belonging to different religions, castes, linguistic areas, etc. One of the major tasks facing the leadership of the national movement was to impart a common national consciousness to the Indian people and to unite them in the common struggle against imperialism.

A major hurdle in this respect was the emergence almost simultaneously with nationalism of communalism. From the 1880s efforts were made to keep the Muslims from joining the broad national movement. The national movement on the other hand set out to unite people professing different religions and, in order to be able to do so, to fight against the divisive communal forces. Its basic strategy in this respect was to have momentous consequences.

### II

THE central element of this strategy may be described as trying to bring about unity from the top. The primary thrust was the effort to win over the middle-

and upper class Muslim leaders who were accepted as the leaders of Muslims. Once these leaders were won over, they were to bring the Muslim masses and middle classes into the national movement, thus to produce Hindu-Muslim unity, and to help exert pressure on imperialism to grant political concessions.

A central feature of this strategy was the notion of giving 'protection' and providing 'safeguards' to the interests of the middle and upper class Muslims. Though in theory this protection was to be given to the rights of the religious minority, in the negotiations among leaders it seldom referred to the religious, cultural, or social rights of the minority. Instead, it constantly hovered around the question of providing guarantees of jobs to the middle class Muslims and a share in the political and administrative power to the Muslim middle and upper classes. For example, the demand was for reserving majority of seats in the Muslim majority provinces for the Muslims and not for adult franchise, which would automatically guarantee a larger number of Muslim legislators in these provinces. The question of protecting the economic rights of the Muslim peasants and workers did not arise at any stage, for even the communalists realised that these rights were not separate from the rights of the Hindu peasants and workers.

The efforts to bring about national unity from the top began almost with the founding of the Indian National Congress. At its fourth session at Allahabad in 1888, the Congress passed a resolution stating "no subject shall be passed for discussion by the Subjects Committee or allowed to be discussed at any Congress by the President thereof, to the introduction of which the Hindu or Mahomedan delegates as a body object, unanimously or nearly unanimously". At its next session at Poona in 1889, the Congress framed its demands for the reform of the Legislative Councils, including the demand for the reservation of seats for the religious minorities in proportion of their share in the total population. The positive aspect of the early moderate nationalist leaders' approach lay in their simultaneous, scientific effort in the political and ideological fields to make the people aware of their emerging unity, of their common interests in the confrontation with imperialism, and of the need for unity in this confrontation.

Lokmanya Tilak, once he awoke to the need for Hindu-Muslim unity, also followed a similar strategy. He became a major architect of the Lucknow Pact which represented an effort to unite the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League in order to be able to put pressure on the colonial authorities to grant constitutional reforms. The agreement as well as the joint political initiative that followed were not seen as part of the preparation for a mass struggle against imperialism, for neither the leaders of the Muslim League nor the 'Moderate' Congressmen could be expected to participate in, or even desire, such a struggle.

Mahatma Gandhi's unity with the leaders of the Khilafat was the most successful effort at Hindu-Muslim unity in the course of the national struggle. It was moreover not devoid of the mass element. It was inspired by the motive of bringing the Muslim



masses and lower middle classes into the mass non-cooperation movement; and to a certain extent it actually succeeded in doing so. In this respect it was qualitatively different from the premises as well as the consequences of the later effort at Hindu-Muslim unity.

At the same time, the basic aspect of the Gandhian strategy also lay in the promotion of an agreement with the middle and upper class Muslim leaders. It was also found useful and necessary to bring the Muslim Ulemas (traditional scholars and divines) into politics to provide religious sanction for the anti-imperialist movement. Above all, for bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity an issue, i.e., the Khilafat, was chosen which had nothing to do with the life of the common people or with the impact of imperialism on their lives. The Khilafat was a popular movement, because of its religious connotation, without being a people's movement.

Moreover, since the Muslim masses and lower-middle classes were brought into the anti-imperialist movement through an agreement with the top leaders and on a religious question, they came into it with their existing consciousness intact. They joined the movement as a matter of religiosity and not for the protection and advancement of their democratic and economic rights. What is even more important, the very terms of this agreement prevented Gandhi and the nationalist leadership from using this opportunity to impart a modern, secular, democratic, and anti-imperialist political consciousness or understanding of social forces to the Muslim masses who participated in the Non-Cooperation-cum-Khilafat Movement. The movement did not even bring before them the aspect of the clash of their economic and social interests with imperialism as had been done earlier by the moderate and extremist nationalists or was being done by Mahatma Gandhi in his non-cooperation agitation. The result was that the mass of Muslims who took active part in the Khilafat Movement remained unacquainted with modern anti-imperialist ideology or the modern principles of political organisation such as secularism and democracy. Instead, the intrusion of religious outlook into politics or political problems was legitimised and perpetuated. When the Khilafat Movement was withdrawn, hardly any nationalist residue was left. At the most a handful sturdy secular nationalists like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad emerged.

Apart from the Khilafat issue, the Congress adopted some other steps to win over the Muslim leaders. It incorporated in its constitution, adopted at its Nagpur session—1920, the Resolution of 1888 quoted above. The Working Committee of the Congress went further in 1921 and recommended the principle of reservation of seats for Muslims on the pattern of the Lucknow Pact in all its bodies up to the All-India Congress Committee. Later it advised the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee to extend the principle to the Sikhs also.

Faced with a recrudescence of communalism and communal riots in 1922, the Congress remedy was to form a high level committee first of two leaders, the Congress President, V. J. Patel, and Hakim Ajmal

Khan and later of four leaders, including these two and Madan Mohan Malaviya and a Muslim leader to be nominated by Hakim Ajmal Khan, to formulate "a scheme for the settlement of Hindu-Muslim differences". In 1923, the AICC, meeting at Gaya, asked Dr. Ansari to get a scheme for National Pact prepared to be circulated for assessing opinion "among leading representatives and influential persons of different communities....." Thus, the communal problem was to be settled through a scheme or pact between the leaders without bringing in or even educating the people at all. The latter were seen as unfit to discuss or decide such an important matter.

The efforts of C. R. Das in 1923 were equally directed at arriving at a pact at the top level to provide 'safeguards' to the 'Muslim interests,' i.e. the interest of the upper and middle class Muslims. Similarly, Motilal Nehru tried to solve the communal problem by negotiating with leaders like the Raja of Mahmudabad.

In fact all the serious Congress efforts at bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity were in the nature of negotiation among the top leaders of the Hindu-Muslim and Sikh communalism and the Congress. Quite often, the Congress assumed the role of an intermediary between the different communal leaders instead of acting as the advance-guard and active organiser of the forces of secular nationalism.

Even the communal riots were met with a similar strategy. Hardly any effort was made to organize mass political and ideological struggle against the organizers of the riots and the outlook which enabled them to flourish. Even the limited mass mobilization technique of the Non-Cooperation Movement was not attempted. Instead, the political effort was almost entirely confined to settling the immediate communal dispute which might have been used to create a riot in the particular locality. Even this was to be done by bringing 'the Hindu' and 'the Muslim' leaders together in the liberal-style for the signing of a local or national pact. Gandhi's momentous fast in 1924 on the communal question could produce nothing more than a surface agreement at the top between the leaders of different 'communities'.

The ridiculousness, inefficacy, and even viciousness of this approach was revealed when unity at the top was sought to be promoted by encouraging the attendance of the 'Hindu' leaders at the Muslim League sessions and the 'Muslim' leaders at the Hindu Mahasabha sessions. In practice, this meant that they were compelled to listen politely to communal speech and even abuses from the opposite communalists, letting the iron enter their souls.

### III

This unity-from-the-top approach towards communal issue had certain inherent weaknesses:

(a) Since the top communal or national leaders were accepted as the spokesmen of the Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs, their entire politics and ideology came to be accepted as 'representing' the Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs and their interests and behaviour. This willy-nilly led to the recognition and

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indirect acceptance of the concept of religious commu-  
nities in India. It began to be widely assumed that  
religious communities, such as Muslim community,  
Hindu community, and Sikh community, existed in  
real life, that such a community had common history,  
that its members possessed common economic, political,  
social and cultural, as apart from religious, interests  
and could therefore have, as Muslims or Hindus, a  
'common cause', and that they in a fact constituted a  
distinct 'unity'. The only major difference between  
the nationalists and the communalists was that the  
former wanted these communities to unite and fight  
together as communities against imperialism and the  
latter to shun and fight each other.<sup>1</sup> Both sides accept  
the logic of communalism. The nationalists would  
then fight for the unity of the communities while the  
communalists would carry the logic further. The early  
nationalists could do both.<sup>2</sup> Thus the basic communal way  
of looking at politics, that is, of seeing the basic task of  
Indian politics not as that of uniting and integrating  
the diverse Indian people but of uniting the distinctly  
formed communities and their leaders, was permitted  
to enter the heart of the Indian political process.

This also produced a few side-effects. For example,  
the communalists were able to freely flit in and out of  
the National Congress simply by emphasising the Hindu  
interests at one time and national unity at another.  
And very secular Congressmen could be transformed  
into rank communalists in the twinkling of an eye.

This unity-from-the-top strategy contained another  
built-in mechanism to promote community-wise think-  
ing among the political leaders involved in the Hindu-  
Muslim unity talks. The entire political position of  
many of these leaders was due to their being Muslim  
or Hindu leaders. It is this which made others recog-  
nize them as leaders. It is this which enabled them  
to play in the senior league along with the giants.  
Consequently, even the best of them found it difficult  
to rise from the position of a Nationalist Muslim or  
Nationalist Hindu to that of a simple nationalist. The  
latter position would suddenly reduce their political  
importance.

This constant negotiation with communal leaders  
also weakened the position of the anti-imperialist  
Muslims who were increasingly forced to think and act  
as Nationalist Muslims. Men like Abul Kalam Azad  
and Asaf Ali i.e., simple nationalists, ipcreasingly,  
became a rarity.

The unity-from-the-top approach could have had  
one political or historical justification. It could be  
used as the entry point to the minds of the non-political  
masses for beginning a campaign for the clarification  
of the political, including the communal, issues. Or  
if the general atmosphere of communal amity among  
communal leaders was immediately utilised to launch  
a powerful attack on the communal outlook and  
ideology. But nothing like this was done. The unity  
at the top was seen as the acme of political achieve-  
ment as well as the end of political action in respect  
of national unity. An agreement between Malaviya  
and Jinnah or between Lala Lajpat Rai, Dr. Ansari,  
and Sardar Mahtab Singh or at an all-parties confe-  
rence including all the communal leaders and parties  
was seen as the maximum programme.

#### IV

A basic weakness of the traditional national leader-  
ship's approach to the communal problem arose  
from the nature of the anti-imperialist struggle which  
was neither continuous, nor consistently opposed to  
compromise with imperialism, nor did it involve the  
common people in continuous political activity. In  
fact its tendency to compromise with imperialism and  
to pull back the masses from struggle was a major  
factor in the repeated recrudescence and growth of  
communalism. After all, the basic common interests  
of the Indian people and, in fact, their very homo-  
geneity arose largely from the needs of the anti-  
colonial struggle and economic and social develop-  
ment, and from the common class interests. Their  
consciousness of common interests, consciousness  
that would override religious, caste, and linguistic  
divisions, could be developed and strengthened only  
through their common struggle against imperialism  
and for their class interests. The nationalist forces  
had precisely in this respect a distinct advantage over  
the communalists. The nationalist forces, whether  
represented by the Congress or by the left groups and  
parties inside or outside it were objectively anti-  
imperialist and could therefore draw to themselves all  
anti-imperialist sentiments, movements, and people.  
On the other hand precisely in their link with imperia-  
lism and their refusal to fight it militantly lay the  
weakness of the communal forces, especially after 1937  
when the colonial authorities extended all out support  
to the communalists. By continuous mass confronta-  
tion with imperialism, it was certainly possible either  
to expose the communal forces or to draw them into  
the main anti-imperialist stream and thus to corrode  
their communalism as well as their influence over the  
masses.

A look at the recent history provides interesting  
data in this respect. It is thus seen that communalism  
receded whenever the anti-imperialist struggle was at  
high tide, while it surged forth when this struggle was  
at an ebb.

As the anti-imperialist movement picked up during  
the First World War with the rise of the Home Rule  
Leagues on the one hand and the armed struggle of  
the Ghadarites on the other, the pro-imperialist com-  
munal forces suffered a relative decline. The years  
from 1918 to 1922 were the halcyon days of both the  
anti-imperialist struggle and Hindu-Muslim unity.  
The influence of Muslim League and other communal  
groups was minimal. In fact, none of them possessed  
a mass base at the time even among the lower or  
middle classes. The communalists became active only  
after the anti-imperialist movement was called off. It  
was the frustration and discontent born out of the  
sudden petering out of the movement that created  
favourable ground for the rise of communal bitterness.  
The Government and the propertied classes could now  
succeed in giving a communal colour to the incipient  
and incoherent struggles of the masses to improve their  
lot. Moreover, it was the acceptance of parliamentary  
politics after 1922 that produced a horde of 'Hindu'  
and 'Muslim' leaders both from within and without  
the Congress ranks. Even so, the afterglow of the  
Non-Cooperation Movement was strong enough

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keep communalism confined to a handful of leaders with their social base narrowly confined to sections of middle and upper strata of society. The possibility of making a breakthrough on the communal front continued to exist through the 1920s in spite of the communal riots.

(3) The rise of the left after 1926, the growth of trade unions and the youth movement, and the anti-Simon Commission protest movement once again enthused the masses and reduced communal tensions. The Second Civil Disobedience Movement swept the entire country. Unlike the earlier movement from 1920 to 1922, the people took part in it as Indians and not as Hindus or Muslims with their separate grievances. The communal parties and leaders were made to look for cover. In fact many of them either joined the movement or at least supported it or went into virtual political retirement. Till 1931-32, the Muslims participated actively in the movement. In fact the national movement engulfed for the first time two new major areas with a Muslim majority—the North-Western Frontier Province and Kashmir. Similarly, the Mewatis (Muslims) began to struggle against the Maharaja of Alwar. Moreover, increasingly the Muslim as well as Hindu youths and workers, and many places peasants, looked up to the Communists, the Nawjawan Bharat Sabha of Bhagat Singh, and Nehru and Subhash Bose for political lead.

The suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1931 and the policy of negotiating with the colonial authorities once again enabled the communal leaders to appear on the scene. It was now that the colonial authorities declared communalism to be the major political issue which must be settled before constitutional advance could be made. They gave hand-picked communal political leaders free run of the First Round Table Conference. Unfortunately, the Congress leadership looking for political advance via a compromise with imperialism readily, though unwillingly, fell into the trap.

The Civil Disobedience Movement was, however, soon resumed, and the communalists did not get an opportunity to grow till its defeat and withdrawal in 1933-34. Even so, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, the most openly communal organizations, remained quite weak till 1936. Within the League, the feudal, unashamedly communal, and pro-imperialist elements remained in a small minority till 1932; and a large number of Muslim leaders were friendly to the Congress. Even in the period 1934-1937, when the Congress fought elections to the central and provincial legislatures with the commitment to fight the official reforms and the Government of India Act of 1935 and the perspective of the resumption of the militant mass anti-imperialist struggle, the communal forces remained weak and could not grow. They were also afraid during this period of appearing to be anti-Congress lest they should be branded as pro-imperialist. No Congress-League or Hindu-Muslim bitterness marked the elections of 1937. Nor did the League do well in the 1937-elections either in seats or in votes or in territorial spread. It failed to get much support in the Muslim majority provinces. It won only 108 of the total of 482 seats reserved for Muslims in the

provincial assemblies. Of the 7,319,445 Muslim votes, only 321,722 voted for the League candidates. It thus failed to gain the support even of the Muslim lower and middle classes. In other words, the communal division did not yet play an important part in Indian politics.

It was only during and after 1937 when, on the one hand, the Congress accepted office under the new Government of India Act of 1935, got reduced to a parliamentary party, gave up the perspective of mass anti-imperialist struggle except in the distant future, and even inside the legislatures pursued bourgeois-landlord politics rather than anti-imperialist, pro-worker, pro-peasant, and, in general, pro-people politics and, on the other, the growing left failed in practice—as distinct from theory—to pose an alternative to the strategy of the Congress right-wing, that the communal forces were able to come into their own and to get ready for a leap forward.

However, the actual leap forward of the Muslim League as also of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh in the North occurred only after 1942 when the Quit India upsurge, during which, it is to be noted, there was no communal trouble in spite of the League's strong opposition to the movement, had been suppressed, the Congress leadership lay quiescent inside jails, the Communists had failed to become the spearhead of the anti-imperialism and popular movements under a mistaken notion of how to support the international anti-Fascist War, and the Indian upper, middle, and lower middle classes had abandoned all politics in order to reap the war-time harvest of jobs, contracts, and high profits.

## V

ANOTHER basic weakness in the nationalist approach to the communal problem was the failure to organize a consistent and principled fight against communalism in general and Hindu communalism in particular. This aspect had several dimensions.

The Muslims were a religious minority in India. The Muslim masses, middle classes, and intellectuals were constantly kept aware of this fact by the imperialist writers, administrators and statesmen and active communal leaders, both Hindu and Muslim. They lived in a situation where a small but vocal Hindu communal element was constantly preaching Hinduisation of the country and equating national liberation with this and other similar objectives. Consequently they were afraid not only of being oppressed and suppressed but also of being gradually submerged.

In this situation, a secular and united national movement could be built only on the basis of an active struggle against the communalism of the religious majority. On the other hand, any softness towards the majority was bound to arouse misgivings, however ungrounded among the minority, thus enabling the Muslim communal leaders to find an opening among the Muslim masses and intellectuals.

The dominant Congress leadership of the national movement was undoubtedly secular and free from religious narrowmindedness. It carried on a propaganda and even movements in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity. At many crucial moments, it re-

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to appease the Hindu communalists. At no stage,  
however, did it launch a frontal political and ideo-  
logical attack on Hindu communalism.

The starting point of this attack had to be the  
recognition of the fact that communalism of the  
majority and the minority would not assume the same  
shape or ideology; they were bound to be different  
in form even while being the same in content.  
Because of its very minority-character, the minority  
communalism assumes an openly sectional, narrow,  
undemocratic and divisive approach and it has to talk  
of 'minority safeguards' and the like. The majority  
communalists, on the other hand, know that the  
democratic principle of majority rule can give them  
the opportunity to implement their programme of  
cultural, religious, and social domination and the  
capacity to corner jobs and other economic oppor-  
tunities for their middle and upper classes. This is  
all the more so if those classes are relatively more  
advanced. The majority communalists can, there-  
fore, safely assume the 'nationalist garb and talk of  
the high principles of democracy, equality of oppor-  
tunity, competition of merit, etc. While the Muslim  
communal nationalist had perforce to take up the  
position that he was a good nationalist but that at  
the same time he wanted to safeguard 'Muslim  
rights', the Hindu communal nationalist need not  
take up openly communal positions for he could  
assume that 'Hindu rights' would be inevitably pro-  
tected by the majority principle.

The nationalist movement had therefore to refuse  
to accept such a simple point of demarcation between  
a nationalist and a communalist as adherence to  
national or sectional demands. Not all those who  
accepted nationalism were secular; many were  
hurling to a lesser or greater degree communal  
thoughts and loyalties and were sometimes as much  
penetrated by a communal loyalty as an openly  
communal Muslim. In other words, a Hindu com-  
munalist would not look like a Muslim separatist. He  
was more likely to be talking of national unity and  
mutual trust.<sup>5</sup> But he might be as viciously com-  
munal. The nationalist leadership had therefore to  
probe deep into the ideology, psychology and the  
political approach of the Hindu communalists. It  
had to see the Hindu equivalent of the Muslim League  
not in the Hindu Mahasabha and thus preen itself on  
having kept Hindu communalism weak, but inside its  
own ranks where a large number of Hindu com-  
munalists of various hues and degrees were to be  
found. Without a struggle against this 'brand of  
Hindu communalism, masquerading as nationalism,  
it was not possible to fight against Muslim com-  
munalism, which, by the very nature of the case,  
would be outside the ranks of nationalism.

Instead of doing this, the Congress leadership  
permitted openly communal elements or those whose  
ideological and political make-up contained a large  
dose of communalism to join the Congress and even  
occupy positions of leadership in it from the local to  
the All-India plane, or otherwise to acquire and  
retain the reputation of being nationalists without any  
repudiation by the Congress or other communal  
leaders. Such communal nationalists, to coin a new

phrase, often left the Congress and even opposed it  
politically. But soon after they would be re-admitted  
into the Congress leadership without any self-criticism  
or disavowal of their recent politics or recent or even  
current communal ideology. A few instances may be  
cited.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya freely sailed  
between the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress. As  
late as 1931 he could represent Hindu communalism  
at the Second Round Table Conference, and  
yet come back in 1932 to become the President-elect  
of the Annual Congress session; and in May 1934,  
the AICC could ask him and Dr. Ansari to form a  
Congress Swarajist Parliamentary Board to fight the  
elections for the Central Legislature. In the Punjab,  
Gopi Chand Bhargava was one day a Hindu com-  
munal representative in the provincial assembly and  
the next day a Congress and Gandhian leader. Both  
in the Punjab and Bengal, many a Congress leader  
had no difficulty in simultaneously championing the  
'Hindu cause' in respect of jobs or constitutional  
discussions or communal riots. After 1922 many of  
the nationalists openly took up communal causes and  
joined their respective communal organisations; yet  
they were soon adorning the Swarajist benches in the  
legislatures. In 1926, Motilal Nehru complained at  
the Gauhati Session of the Congress against his com-  
munal nationalist critics:

"There has been a veritable rout of the Swarajists...  
But this was not because they were Swarajists, but  
because they were Nationalists...It was a fight  
between the forces of Nationalism and those of low  
order of communalism reinforced by wealth, whole-  
sale corruption, terrorism and falsehood.  
'Religion in danger', was the cry of the opponents  
of the Congress, both Hindu and Muslim. I have  
been freely denounced as a beef-eater and destroyer  
of cows, the supporter of the prohibition of music  
before mosques, and the one man responsible for  
the stoppage of Ramlila processions in Allahabad  
...Staying in Dak and Inspection bungalows, and  
eating food cooked in European style, was taken  
to confirm the lying propaganda."

Yet, very soon after, he and his communal critics were  
marching in step in the freedom struggle!

It is also important to note that the lead in organis-  
ing the Shuddhi and Sangathan movements was taken  
by leading Congressmen and other nationalists. Other  
Congressmen followed suit by taking active part in the  
organisation of the Tabligh and Tanzim Movements.  
The Congress leadership condemned neither. After a  
great deal of debate, it came out only against the use  
of coercion in their activities.

Similarly, many nationalist newspapers functioned  
as whole-time nationalist and part-time communal  
organs. For example, the *Tribune* of Lahore had the  
widely accepted reputation of being a nationalist organ.  
But it also constantly agitated for greater Hindu share  
in Government jobs, assembly seats, etc., and openly  
adopted a 'pro-Hindu', that is, Hindu communal,  
attitude on communal riots, etc. This was also true  
of the *Leader* of Allahabad and the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*  
of Calcutta. Even the *Hindustan Times* was not willing



to disown the Hindu Mahasabha in spite of its association with Mahatma Gandhi and G.D. Birla.

It was very difficult for the Muslims to distinguish between the two different roles of such newspapers and individuals or between the constantly interchangeable nationalist and communal phases in their lives. A rich crop of bitterness and the widespread belief in the hypocrisy of the nationalists were the inevitable results.

Many a Congress leader also combined in himself the roles of a nationalist leader and the propagator of his religion or at least of its reform. While in theory it could be maintained that there was nothing wrong in a person being a good Indian and a good Hindu or a good Muslim, in practice this could apply only to their personal lives. It was not possible nor therefore desirable to have such dual public roles in a multi-religious country where communal elements were active with the full backing of the Government. This invariably spread confusion among the people which was freely utilised by the communal leaders.

It should also be noted that even apart from communal nationalists like Madan Mohan Malaviya, N.C. Kelkar, Aney, and the post-1922 Lajpat Rai, communal thinking had penetrated deep into the Congress ranks. Many among the front rank Congress leaders were suffering from communalism to a certain extent. This was to prove quite a disaster when some of them, for example, K.M. Munshi, became Ministers in the provinces in 1937. Nor was the political behaviour of Sardar Patel in 1947 a sudden and momentary aberration. It had deep historical roots; and not only in his personal history.

One peculiar example of the penetration of communal ideology into the nationalist ranks was the wide prevalence of the communal views of Indian history, particularly in its subtler forms. Many of the Congress leaders openly spoke and wrote of India having suffered under foreign rule for a thousand years, and of the sharp decline of Indian society and culture under 'Muslim rule'. A panegyric view of ancient Indian society, polity, economy and culture was virtually considered a basic element of nationalist ideology. Nearly all the Congress leaders joined in the glorification of Shivaji, Maharana Pratap, and Guru Gobind Singh as national heroes who had 'fought for freedom' against 'foreign rule'. Leaders and writers like Seth Govind Dass made into heroes every little Rajput or Bundela Zamindar who had fought a battle against a Muslim Faujdar, Subedar or Chieftain. Similarly, many Congress leaders took up the cause of Hindi not so much against English as against Urdu and propagated it not on grounds of democracy and democratic culture but on openly communal grounds. Urdu was branded as a foreign language and as the language of the Muslims, while Hindi was praised as the language of Hindus.

The Congress and the national leadership also failed to organise a campaign against the social and cultural taboos, inclusiveness and narrowmindedness practised by the Hindus in their relations with the Muslims. True, this was not a causative factor in the rise of communalism, because for centuries these had not been seen by the Muslims as forms of discrimination. There was no racial or superiority complex invol-

ved in them on either side. They were just a matter of religion. But it should not be forgotten that the form was entirely social. The result was that communalism started burgeoning forth, though for other reasons, these taboos, etc., were used by Muslim communalists to spread anti-Hindu feeling among the Muslim lower middle classes and to stoke the fires of communal hatred. It was essential at this stage to fight and overcome these social taboos, particularly their discriminatory aspects. The failure of such a struggle was particularly surprising because all very similar struggles were being waged in the case of similar taboos and discriminations against Harijans and women. In part at least, it may be suggested, this failure was due to the wide prevalence of socially reactionary ideologies in the nationalist ranks.

This soft policy towards the communal nationalist and the communal ideology became a major barrier in the national leadership's efforts to solve the communal problem through negotiations at the top. There were perhaps many objective factors which would in any case have in the end led to the failure of this entire approach. The active support of the colonial authorities to the communal leaders and parties was one such factor. Another was the close link between the communalists and the vested social and economic interests. But whatever chances of success the approach had, even more, whatever chances existed of using this negotiations to expose the Muslim communal leadership before the Muslims were marred by the failure of the Congress leadership to stand up firmly against the pressures from the Hindu communalists within and outside its own ranks. After all, the entire logic of negotiations on 'communal safeguards' lay in the recognition of the fact that a minority, however constituted, was bound to have some fears, however irrational and lacking an objective basis, of being oppressed and suppressed by the majority. Furthermore, the entire efficacy of the approach of negotiating at the top would lie in the adoption of a generous approach by the majority that gradually the irrational fears may disappear in light of real life experience. A leadership should even try to negotiate on 'communal safeguards' if generosity was not to be shown. It should then adopt a different approach. It was suicidal to follow the game and then not obey its rules. But this is precisely what the Congress leadership did under the pressure of Hindu communalism.

The entire history of Hindu-Muslim and Congress League negotiations illustrates this criticism. For example, the nationalist leadership fully recognised that the separate electorate was playing havoc with the middle-class voter-based politics of India and that its replacement by joint electorate was absolutely essential for the healthy development of Indian politics. In fact, in the political compromise of the 1920s and 1930s no political sacrifice was too big to make to arrive at such a consummation. Several times when the Muslim communalists demanded a joint electorate in return for other concessions, Congress leaders failed to clinch the issue because they were not willing to override the Hindu communal opinion. Thus at least three such chances—



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AR DEMOCRACY

...in the course of discussions on the Nehru Committee  
...Report, in 1931 at the Second Round Table Conferen  
...and in 1932 at the All Parties Unity Conference—  
...were raised. In fact, in 1932, the British Govern  
...ment was so perturbed by the likelihood of an agree  
...ment on the question of joint electorates that it an  
...nounced its own Communal Award, accepting virtually  
...all the demands of the Muslim Communalists while  
...retaining separate electorates. The only other safe  
...guard that the Muslim communalists could now ask  
...for was a separate polity; and they now started on that  
...road through the intermediate stage of asking for a  
...weak Centre.

...Both the national leadership and the Hindu com  
...munalists now revealed another interesting character  
...istic: what they would not concede to the Muslim com  
...munalists, they would accept willy-nilly and without  
...any struggle when decreed by the colonial authorities,  
...thus letting the Muslim communalists stay and prosper  
...in the lap of imperialism.

...One more consequence of this failure of the nation  
...al leadership to fight against Hindu communalism and  
...Hindu communal nationalists within its own ranks may  
...be pointed out. It was compelled to show similar  
...‘liberalism’ towards the Muslim and Sikh communal  
...ism. Moreover, instead of promoting a sturdy, secular  
...nationalism among its Muslim followers, it was com  
...pelled to rely on, and in fact even promote, Nationalist  
...Muslims who gradually acquired a vested interest in  
...this brand of nationalism. They were undoubtedly  
...nationalists but their political importance also depend  
...ed on the fact of their being Muslims and Muslim  
...‘representatives’. Sturdy nationalists like Abul Kalam  
...Azad rapidly became an anachronism in this situation.  
...A permanent hostage was given to communalism in  
...the country; and the Congress leadership dared not  
...wage even a friendly struggle against communal  
...nationalists, whether Hindu or Muslim. The secular  
...principal was observed by letting the nationalist  
...Muslims work freely in the Muslim League as the  
...Hindu nationalists had been permitted to do in the  
...Hindu Mahasabha.

...Apart from the ideological factor, the failure of the  
...Congress leadership to actively struggle against Hindu  
...communalism was closely linked to its policy of parlia  
...mentarianism and its middle class social base. The  
...colonial economy created, especially in the 1930s, a  
...situation of extremely poor economic opportunities  
...and increasing unemployment for the middle and  
...lower middle class Indians who were compelled to  
...compete with each other for the scarce opportunities  
...and resources. Even those whose political views  
...extended to the overthrow of imperialism in the long  
...run had to look to their own maintenance in the  
...short run. In the absence of a powerful anti-imperia  
...list movement to inspire them, the middle classes  
...found that communal and other sectional considera  
...tions could play an important role in their getting  
...a share of the shrinking national cake. Consequently,  
...not only the Muslim but also the Hindu middle classes  
...were inclined towards communalism.

...The Congress leadership could to a certain extent  
...ignore the middle classes in the course of its anti  
...imperialist campaigns by relying on the masses and

...the momentary enthusiasm of all the people. But when  
...it came to elections to the legislatures or the local  
...bodies, the masses had no votes and reliance had to  
...be placed on the communal minded lower middle and  
...middle classes among whom the communal leaders,  
...especially those who had the reputation of being  
...simultaneously nationalists and the guardians of ‘Hindu  
...interests’, had a great deal of prestige. The separate  
...electorates made this dependence doubly binding on  
...both the Hindu and the Muslim candidates. The  
...penalty for opposing communal nationalists was paid  
...by the Swarajists through their crushing defeat in the  
...election of 1926 in the Punjab and U.P. and the  
...general loss of ground in the country as a whole.

...It was therefore not fortuitous that even sturdy na  
...tionalists were afraid of having a frontal confrontation  
...with leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya or of over  
...riding the Hindu communal opinion in the Hindu  
...Muslim unity conferences and constitutional discussions  
...even when in private they totally disagreed with this  
...opinion. Adult franchise and joint electorate alone  
...were to free those who seek elections, from this con  
...straint. But the habits acquired over decades still  
...persist. Moreover, the lower middle, middle, and  
...upper classes, still living in the midst of economic  
...backwardness, are even today prone to communal and  
...other divisive appeals and ideologies, except in the  
...few areas like Bengal where the left is strong.

## VI

...JAWAHARLAL Nehru was one Congress leader who  
...was able to see with great clarity the basic weak  
...nesses of the Moderate-Tilakite-Gandhian strategy of  
...solving the communal problem through an agreement  
...at the top. His writings on the subject from 1934 to  
...1939 have a freshness of approach and contain deep  
...insights. His was also one of the first efforts to apply  
...the Marxist approach to the problem. He was able  
...to clearly see that national unity should be a unity  
...between the masses and not an artificially arranged  
...marriage of convenience between the leaders.

...During 1936-37, he used his recently acquired stra  
...tegic position inside the Congress to block the efforts  
...to arrive at a patchwork unity with the leaders of the  
...Muslim League. To such efforts he counterposed the  
...alternative political line of militant anti-imperialism,  
...refusal to fall into the constitutional trap, politics based  
...on the masses, and the direct winning over of the  
...Muslim peasants and workers through direct political  
...work among them on the basis of their class demands,  
...thus not only bypassing the middle and upper class  
...communal leaders but also exposing their pro-feudal  
...and pro-capitalist bias. This was especially impor  
...tant because the colonial authorities and the com  
...munal leaders gave a communal colouring to most of  
...the class and social contradictions in the country. To  
...implement his political line, Nehru proposed the  
...boycott of the Government of India Act 1935 and  
...refusal to form provincial ministries under it, direct  
...affiliation of the workers’ and peasants’ organisations  
...to the Congress, close cooperation with the Congress,  
...Socialists and the Communists, and a Muslim Mass  
...Contact Programme.

...But this programme never took off. It crashed



even before it got off the ground. The only thing he could save from the debris was his pilot's uniform and the badge of captaincy. The Congress assumed office in the provinces during his presidentship of the Congress. The direct affiliation of peasants' and workers' organisations to the Congress was rejected out of hand by the Congress right. The Congress Ministries failed to follow distinctly pro-peasant and pro-worker policies. On the other hand, in many provinces, for example, the Punjab and Bengal, the local Congress leadership adopted a pro-landlord and moneylender stance. The Muslim Mass Contact Programme was never seriously undertaken, for it could not be undertaken without a radical agrarian programme and pro-labour and pro-artisan policies in the towns and cities.

Given the bourgeois outlook of the dominant Congress leadership, all this was inevitable. On the other hand, Nehru's approach to the communal problem proved to be a complete failure because of its very impracticability. His radicalism blocked the path of negotiations and compromise at the top, which was in the end adopted with disastrous results in 1947, but which might conceivably have done less damage in 1937-39.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, he and the left were either too weak inside the Congress or outside it to implement a mass line on the question or unwilling to go into the political wilderness in trying to do so. For example, Nehru rightly opposed the acceptance of the Muslim League claim that it was the sole representative of the Muslims but he failed to take active political and organisational steps to prevent such a claim from becoming a reality. He rightly said that the Congress should deal directly with the Muslim masses. But he failed to establish such direct contact. The Congress lost flexibility at the top without gaining any new ground among the Muslim masses. And this happened at a time when the Muslim League and the colonial authorities, having been thoroughly frightened by the Congress victory in the 1937 elections, by Nehru's radical thunder and the rapid growth of the left, were manoeuvring furiously and brilliantly both at the top, by incorporating the nationalist Muslims of U.P., the Unionists of Punjab and the Krishak Praja Samiti of Bengal into the League, and at the lower levels by giving the League a radical and even, anti-imperialist image. The result was that Nehru wounded the upper class Muslim communal tiger without pulling out its teeth. The price had to be paid within the period of a decade. The fact is that a political line which is not backed by concrete political action is at best irrelevant and at worst a disaster.

## VII

THE reality of Indian politics was that there could be no solution whether radical or conservative, to the communal problem within the framework of the existing nationalist politics. Only strong left-wing and mass based politics could have provided this. Such politics did not, however, exist; and a short cut could not meet the situation.

Not all historical situations have an instant solution. To look for such instant solutions

while ignoring the past and the present in connections is to indulge in futile romanticism. Conditions and forces for a solution have been got ready over a number of years and decades. Moreover, nations and societies are sometimes placed in a situation in which their problems cannot be solved piecemeal, however hard may be the good-will desire to do so.

In India, the colonial economy and polity created a situation in the 1930s where its social, economic, and political problems cried out for simultaneous and radical change—a veritable revolution. Nehru had glimpses of the reality. Unfortunately, he and the left failed to grapple with the situation.

The situation is, however, still with us, as the spread of communal, regional, linguistic and caste politics shows. The price of the failure to tackle the politics of colonial rule and underdevelopment at their root was paid by the partition of the land into two in 1947. The unity of the Indian people in the phase of failure of underdeveloped capitalism can be maintained only by making a socialist revolution. In a rather profound sense, it can be said that the partition of 1947 was due to the failure of the Indian people in having failed to develop peasants' and workers' organisations and a powerful socialist movement. Let history not repeat itself!

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1. The impact of this approach has been all pervasive. To even some of the most secular persons readily talk of the Hindu-Sikh or Muslim community existing, thinking, feeling, etc. In fact the very use of the term is unscientific and means, though unconscious, acceptance of the communal approach.
2. Thus Jinnah could claim in 1924 that his aim was "to organize the Muslim community, not with a view to quarrel with the Hindu community, but with a view to unite and cooperate with it in their motherland". He was sure that "once they had organized themselves they would join hands with the Hindu Mahasabha and declare to the world that Hindus and Mohammedans are brothers".
3. As W.C. Smith has pointed out in his *Modern Islam in India*: "The Movement was a mighty effort of a people struggling to free itself; and it showed that, when engaged in that struggle, the people without being united in religion, were quite capable of being united in political ideals and in action. They worked, fought, suffered together, with gladness."
4. In fact, one of the most surprising aspects of Indian political development was, and still is, that the Hindu communalists, not satisfied with this position but tried to create a minority psychology of fear among the Hindus, holding up before them the nightmare of Muslim domination unless they united separately. To make the nightmare look plausible the prospect of Indian Muslims being aided by Afghanistan, Iran, and Asia were seriously discussed.
5. This aspect was clearly visible to some of the political leaders of the 1920s and 1930s. For example, Chaudhary Khaliquzzaman who was a Nationalist Muslim at the time, wrote in September 1934 to Dr. Ansari: "If Malviya and I were only Hindu nationalists, I think every communalist Muslim who honestly fights for the rights of his community would be making it a clear official favours and personal gain from the Government list."
6. Gandhi's strategy had at best brought in millions of Muslim active participants in the non-Cooperation Movement. But his strategy, because of his inability to work out his programme, achieved nothing. Under the Gandhian leadership, furious continuous attempts were made to solve the communal problem through negotiations at the top, Nehru set the tradition, which also followed after 1947, that if only we ignored communal abuses and ridiculing it occasionally, the spectre would soon get exorcised.



# UNDERSTANDING THROUGH KNOWLEDGE\*

A. RAHMAN

## I

The organisers of the Seminar on 'Inter-Religious Understanding' laid down a few proposals. In elaborating these they had mentioned "an attitude of respect towards all religions" and "to bring about such understanding and to promote a climate of peace". I would like to make "understanding" and "respect" as a take off point of what I have to say.

## II

My first contention is that understanding comes out of knowledge and respect is born out of the conviction that the knowledge is true. True in the sense that it can be verified by definite procedures and by any person.

Let us first begin asking ourselves about the knowledge we possess of a religion, in which we believe or of other religions as well. What are the aspects which require to be studied and have been studied. The available literature could be categorised into three distinct categories:

- (i) Study of religion as such, i.e. basic tenets of a faith, growth of rituals—reform movements within the framework of a religion, various sects and the differences which lead to their creation. It may also include the description of what constitutes a religious experience.
- (ii) Social role of religious movements.
- (iii) Religious ideas about natural phenomena and the picture of world cosmos.

The first category of literature is written by the followers of different religions for the belief they hold. Much of it is eulogistic, extolling the virtues of their respective religions. It has appeal for those who are already believers. Its appeal to those who do not believe in religion, or members of one religion for

\* Paper read in a Seminar on Inter-religious Understanding organised by Islam and Modern Age Society, New Delhi in 1971.

that of another is rather limited. While the former may draw some historical and social data from the literature, the latter may reject the formulations of another religion, by virtue of their psychological conditioning by the religion which they have been born into.

The literature on social role of religious movements, particularly the comparative studies, do give us an insight about the impact of certain ideas on social organisation and may give us valuable insights. When written scientifically and objectively, it may make the followers of a religion aware of the limitations of their own and good points of others, and may help to create an atmosphere which could be amicable to coexistence of followers of different religions. By implication such studies would necessitate that those who carry out such studies make themselves free of the confining shackles of a religious outlook and prejudices against the followers of others.

The literature on the religious ideas about natural phenomena is rather meagre now, since scientific knowledge has completely replaced the religious knowledge which had existed earlier. Even the followers of a religion are hard put to justifying what they believe in.

I would not go into a detailed discussion of the nature of our present knowledge about what constitutes religious experience, the social role of religion and knowledge about natural phenomena since I have discussed it elsewhere at some detail. Those who are interested can refer to these papers<sup>1</sup>. In this context it would also be worthwhile to refer to *Seminar*, 55 on Scientific Attitude, where a number of scientists had discussed the problem, including a number of leading world biologists. With this background I would like to pose two questions and devote some attention to them.

## III

Why belief in religion has led to intolerance? Can the study of the evolution of man and his society throw any light and help remove our present day limitations?

When we study religion as phenomena it would become clear to us that the major limitation of religious approach lies in its non-evolutionary character. There is no in-built mechanism in any religion which could allow it to grow in terms of knowledge, concepts and practice. Any addition to knowledge, any change in social structure and its consequences on the individual cannot find an automatic, or after processing, acceptance in the religious framework. This rigidity, arising out of lack of sensitivity and absence of a corrective mechanism, in my opinion, is the cause of intolerance between the followers of one religion towards those of others.

Science, for instance, on the other hand, has an in-built mechanism, which allows for its growth and imparts a vigour to it. If data is at variance with a theory, there are definite methods to verify it and to bring theory in line with the observed phenomena. In other words existing knowledge, at any time and the conceptual framework have to be consistent with each other.



In religion there is no such mechanism and hence there is stagnation, or the force of social pressures leads to abandoning of certain tenets over a period of time. We could see these elements having their role in diverse fields. In the field of natural phenomena the debate on geo-centric theory or the creation of the world, over the theory of evolution or what is happening in our times in the field of social codes, regarding birth control or abortion, gives us an idea how these, once a central feature of religious thought, have been or are being abandoned. In the absence of such a mechanism of self-correction, either certain aspects of thought and practice die out in the course of time or a definite effort is made to reform the religion. In the true sense of the term a religion cannot be reformed. The followers of the reformed religion constitute a new sect or religion itself. They are persecuted with considerable vigour by the followers of the parent religion. History of all religions is full of such examples and these need not be recounted here.

In the absence of a suitable mechanism in religions, through which new knowledge of nature and social development are incorporated and the religion is able to grow and the conceptual framework becomes consistent with knowledge, the application of religious modes of thought to present day world is like applying Ptolemaic theory to the existing knowledge of solar system. A glance at the history of religions does not give us any hope that such a mechanism could ever be built and if built could be widely acceptable and applied generally. In the absence of such a hope one could hardly expect a peaceful coexistence between the followers of different religions. Unless, of course, religion gives up its social role and becomes strictly a personal and private affair.

#### IV

THE situation, therefore, leaves to us three options. Firstly, stick to the tenets of a religion and stagnate socially and intellectually. This has happened to most societies who have attempted to do so. Secondly, every time when the situation becomes intolerable, make a major reform in the parent religion to form a new sect, or create a new religion to suit the needs of the time. This has been happening throughout human history, but it does not seem to make much difference to the overall situation. It, on the contrary, has created further divisions amongst mankind and extreme bitterness and suffering between followers of parent religion and the new sects or new religions. The third option is to recognise the role of religion in past history, analyse it scientifically and try to learn lessons from it in developing new outlook and attitudes.

I propose to deal at some length with the third option, since such an approach has future possibilities in terms of bringing people together by ending their isolation based on narrow loyalties and limited intellectual approaches. Further, such an option also involves conscious acceptance of open and verifiable methods and techniques for those who wish to adopt it.

Looking at the evolution of man and society and trying to place different movements in different periods of history, we get another picture which is rather

interesting and relevant to our understanding of religion in historical perspective. Phases of human evolution when man part of social organisation, his knowledge extremely rudimentary. He had developed knowledge of a few natural processes that acquired the control of fire, and agriculture, and manufacture of tools. While he could do that he had no deep understanding of natural process and hence no control over it. He was struggling with these he was the problem of his own creation, that is, the structure he was trying to build would be disorganised by the acts of individuals, their greed and lust. The question before him was how to control the latter. He hardly had any insight into the logic or deep understanding of social organisation. The solution he found for himself was to control the *man*. It was thought that change brought about through morals, preaching and precept. This was his ambition, aggressiveness and desire which were threatening the stability of the effects to acquire knowledge of nature, and coming in the way of man's struggle with himself and nature. This is what he tried to do and achieve—despite the fact that the problem remains.

This effort, of checking man's aggressiveness, and destructive tendencies could be classified into two categories. One tried to preach the rejection of worldly goods and ambition as in Buddhism. This approach improved as long as man was involved in agriculture, aggressiveness and destruction. But when he had to dispose of his property to change social circumstances, it emphasised individual action and withdrawal of oneself from society. It is rare that a large number of individuals withdraw from the world and lived in isolation in their relation with each other, which they had hoped to control the world.

The second trend in religion, for instance, by Christianity, was the idea of withdrawing from the world and bind man in a defined social order and codes of behaviour. It was based on faith and a rigorous code of conduct, able to check erring individuals, aggressiveness and destructive tendencies. The early stages of this approach and the results in its early stages are, however, well known. In its later stages, these religions changed their activities, these religions changed and in doing so they became more and more the times. Since they had been modifying themselves, the changed situations, led to the rise of sects and internecine wars and schisms. This led to loosening



In religion there is no such mechanism and hence there is stagnation, or the force of social pressures leads to abandoning of certain tenets over a period of time. We could see these elements having their role in diverse fields. In the field of natural phenomena the debate on geo-centric theory or the creation of the world, over the theory of evolution or what is happening in our times in the field of social codes, regarding birth control or abortion, gives us an idea how these, once a central feature of religious thought, have been or are being abandoned. In the absence of such a mechanism of self-correction, either certain aspects of thought and practice die out in the course of time or a definite effort is made to reform the religion. In the true sense of the term a religion cannot be reformed. The followers of the reformed religion constitute a new sect or religion itself. They are persecuted with considerable vigour by the followers of the parent religion. History of all religions is full of such examples and these need not be recounted here.

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This effort, of checking man's ambition, aggressiveness, and destructive tendencies, by different religions could be classified into two categories. One tried to preach the rejection of social role by giving up worldly goods and ambitions, for instance, Buddhism. This approach implicitly recognised that as long as man was involved in a social role his ambitions, aggressiveness and destructive tendencies could not be changed, nor he had enough means at his disposal to change social circumstances. In doing so it emphasised individual action by way of isolating oneself from society. It is rather interesting that large number of individuals who isolated themselves from the world and lived in monasteries were victims in their relation with each other, of the same violence which they had hoped to control by giving up the world.

The second trend in religions was represented, for instance, by Christianity and Islam. It rejected the idea of withdrawing from the world, and tried to bind man in a defined social organisation, through social codes of behaviour. It was hoped that a common faith and a rigorous code of social behaviour would be able to check erring individuals and their ambitions, aggressiveness and destructive tendencies. The success of this approach and the release of social energy, in its early stages is too well known to be repeated here. The points are, however, worth considering. Through the activities, these religions changed societies considerably and in doing so they became themselves out of tune with the times. Since they had no inbuilt mechanism of modifying themselves, the changes introduced to meet the changed situations, led to the formation of sects and internecine wars which dissipated their energies. This led to loosening of social codes of behaviour

values and the had tried to co

The second of man and s environment, by religion. It laid emphasis on its origin technology. I a hostile and it ing the laws of man would be able to live in other trend is nents. This l ideas generated industrial deve cal and indust happiness of a just and egal social environ approach was organised relig appealed to the ing to some c thinking. The was that once would change

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WHAT we need our past e attempt to evol ting knowledge possibilities, w available and his environmen

The knowl of mass media lers of present consumer soci what they wa would expect t cial attitudes a a generation, suggesting that What, howe emphasise ques, which society, for ween people to dress and se attitude of pe gions could a approach and our effort into from such a occurred to us associating it t



and the re-emergence of those features which they had tried to control.

The second phase in the development of evolution of man and society laid emphasis on the change in environment, as against the change in man as preached by religion. This also had two distinct trends. One had emphasis on change in natural environment and had its origin in the development of science and technology. It was thought that man's environment was hostile and if it can be controlled through understanding the laws of nature and application of technology, man would be able to meet his needs and would be able to live in harmony with nature and himself. The other trend is represented by various socialist movements. This had its origin in the social and political changes generated as a result of science, technology and industrial development. It was felt purely technological and industrial development could not lead to the happiness of man and change in his attitudes unless a just and egalitarian society was established, that is, social environment was also changed. This type of approach was similar in character to the effort of the organised religions and as these movements grew they appealed to the followers of different religions by referring to some of the common features between their thinking. The main assumption of both these trends was that once man's environment was changed he would change automatically.

Today as we look back we realise the limitation of earlier efforts, being faced with the same problems in a somewhat more complex form.

### V

What we need therefore is a more critical analysis of our past efforts, the reasons of their failure and an attempt to evolve a solution in consonance with the existing knowledge. If we look around we could notice the possibilities, which now exist, on the basis of knowledge available and techniques developed to change man and his environment according to desired goals.

The knowledge of psychology and the techniques of mass media and persuasion have enabled the controllers of present day society, which I would term as consumer society, not only to persuade men to want what they want them to do but also behave as they would expect them to behave. This has changed the social attitudes as well as behaviour of people in less than a generation, which are beyond recognition. I am not suggesting that all these changes are good and desirable. What, however, I am suggesting and would like to emphasise is the use of the same knowledge and techniques, which has served so well the interests of consumer society, for achieving different goals—say, amity between people of different religions. If people's attitude towards dress and sex could be changed so radically then the attitude of people towards followers of different religions could also be changed, provided we make the approach and generate the necessary resources to put our effort into effect. We have somehow shied away from such an approach, either because it has not occurred to us or we have shuddered away from it by associating it too closely with its present debased use.

Our knowledge of human societies has also developed considerably. We have begun to understand how societies function, their internal stresses and strains, the factors which retard or accelerate their growth and how crises generate and develop. The knowledge has not yet reached a level when we could develop definite laws of society, as we have developed laws of nature, even then it is sufficient to enable us to organise societies along definite lines and according to goals we choose for ourselves.

The developments in science and technology have reached a stage when almost everything seems to be within our reach, provided we define our goals specifically and are able to direct our resources towards it. Today man can synthesise any raw material he wants; he is no longer dependent on nature's resources alone; can breed defined characters in plants and animals; may soon be able to control weather; he has stepped out of the earth and its limitations. His knowledge and control of biological process is reaching a stage when he is likely to change the very nature of Man and his behaviour. In other words the far distant goals of early history have either been reached or are about to be reached. These goals, their conceptual framework and the possibilities which ensue from them, are not only totally new, in terms of earlier philosophies and codes of behaviour, but are inextricably linked with the knowledge which has generated them. It is for us to realise them in actual practice.

### VI

The question we face is what goals we adopt, how to adopt them and how we operate them. Here again for answering them we have to have recourse to present scientific and technical knowledge available to us.

I began this paper on the key note of knowledge as a basis of our understanding and action, as against a set of beliefs or philosophies. I have tried to use this approach to the understanding of the problem. I have tried to develop a picture, which I hope throws some light on the problem.

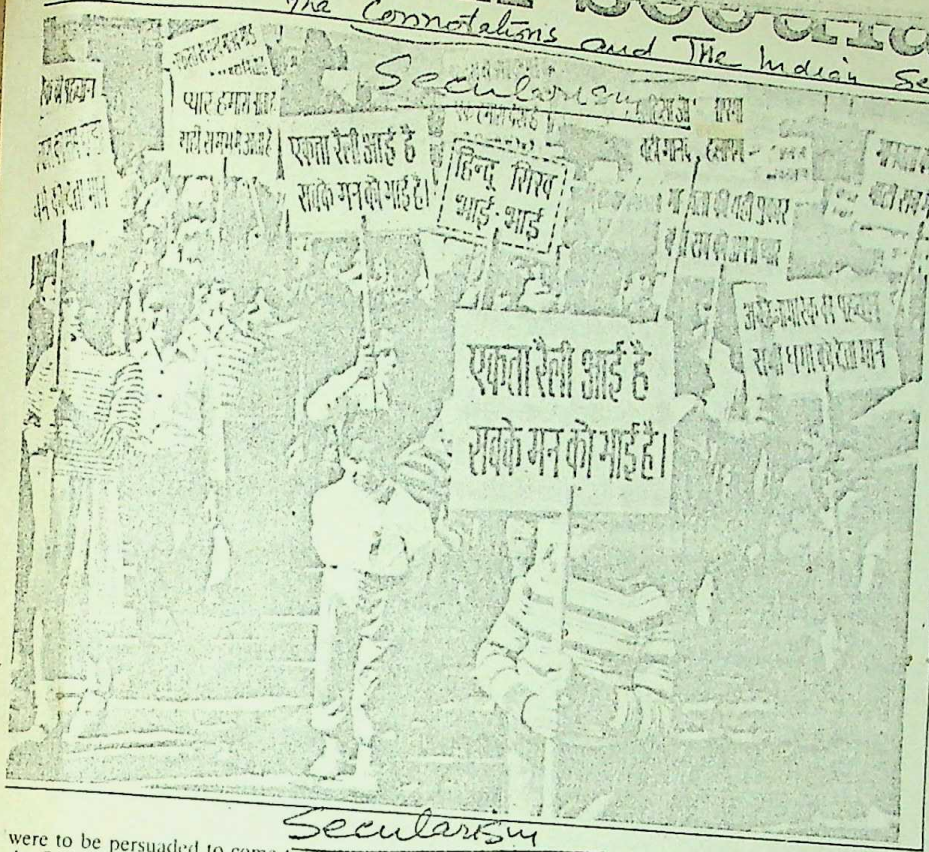
The basic picture which emerges is that the goal of peaceful coexistence between followers of different religions is rather a minor goal. It can be achieved through the use of psychological knowledge of mass media and techniques, if we so desire. The main problem from my point of view is to make men's attitudes consistent with existent knowledge and to use the latter to the broader tasks which face mankind. This would require a major movement of development of scientific attitude among people, and use of information and knowledge in arriving at personal and social decisions. We are thus at the threshold of a revolution in thought and action than we have known before and the stakes are also high.

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# The Connotations and The Indian Secularism



## Secularism

were to be persuaded to come to the Congress fold instead of going to the League. This was an attempt to blend the 'nationalist' sentiment of the Muslims with their communal identity. Clearly, then since the call of the Congress to the Muslims was only partially different from that of the League in that both appealed to their Muslim identity, though in different measures, the Congress appeal could only be weakly persuasive and shortlived; the appearance of the slightest communal tension, engineered by either side, would send the Muslims reeling back to the League banner. If then the Congress and the League (or 'nationalism' and 'communalism') stood as each other's negation in real life, conceptually they treaded a considerable part of the ground in step with each other.

Conceptually it is the analysis of society in terms of class that stands as a real alternative to communalism and similar other phenomena like casteism, regionalism etc., for the class identity transcends and stands in opposition to the communal or caste or regional identities. It was his alternative that was unavailable to India's medieval centuries. It needs to be emphasised here that the concept of class is inclusive of, but not coterminous with economic analysis. It is as much concerned with the consciousness

of the role of each class in society as with the playing out of the role itself. It is equally necessary to emphasise that communalism is not the product of economic or political backwardness. One has only to look around to notice that communal rioting — the extreme manifestation of communalism — occurs most frequently and most ferociously in small or big towns

of mobilisation of votes, with the attendant list of demands on behalf of the mobilised community or caste.

On one hand, such mobilisation has helped a very large mass of people to participate in this modern political process; on the other the very success of such participation has tended to reinforce, rather than erode, their commun-

**"The already much exercised option open to us is to treat the violent manifestations of communalism as a law and order problem, even as at a subterranean level, we operate through its silent manifestations for mobilising votes and support. At times the heavy hand of the law and order machinery might control the violent eruption effectively; at others it might fail to do so."**

with a burgeoning economy: Ahmedabad, Baroda, Hyderabad, Moradabad etc., and of course Punjab.

Similarly the very modern political structure erected after Independence, namely the parliamentary process, functions with pre-modern operative units. Community or caste or linguistic group are the most tried units of mobi-

lisation or caste identity. It created in particular a vested interest of the leadership of these groups to further strengthen their communal or caste solidarity. It is thus that the very process of economic and political modernisation has lent vitality to a traditional feature.

If class is then the conceptual alternative to community, one would expect that left parties,

professing faith in class analysis, ought to set the pace for the secularisation of Indian polity. However, the record of these parties is rather a mixed bag. Not infrequently they have eagerly entered into alliances with patently communal parties for the sake of winning elections and forming governments, parties such as the Muslim League in Kerala, and Akali Dal in Punjab, even the Jan Sangh (briefly in 1967). Nor could the left parties always claim that the communal or caste identity of a person had never weighed with them in choosing their candidates.

One could, of course, argue that the existence of communities is after all a fact of life and any analysis of society which ignores this fact can hardly approximate to the realities of life. But then it is equally true that our society comprises so many different identities: it consists of peasants and landlords, artisans and traders, workers and capitalists as much as of Hindus and Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, Brahmins and lower castes, Bengalis and Telugus etc. Therefore the analysis of Indian society in terms of one category has no more privileged a claim to real life approximation than another. The choice of analytical categories by political parties as much as by social scientists is after all a subjective choice. However, everyone must reckon with the social consequences of one's choice.

For reasons of history our polity is today overwhelmingly dominated by parties which operate with community as their central analytical category, though following different strategies. The parties operating largely with the alternative conceptual category of class, though exercising considerable influence, do not appear to be in a position in the near future, to counterbalance the overwhelming presence of communalism in all its range of manifestations. It is thus that the true conceptual alternative to communalism is far from becoming the real life alternative. So long then as we work this polity, there appears hardly an escape from communalism. The already much exercised option still open to us is to treat the violent manifestation of communalism as a law-and-order problem, even as, at the subterranean level, we operate through its silent manifestation for mobilising votes and support. At times the heavy hand of the law-and-order machinery might control the violent eruption effectively; at others it might fail to do so. But, the subterranean silent tensions created by the routine operations of political parties, in government, or outside, will always keep accumulating the dry powder, ready for the next violent explosion.



In the context of the nation's current preoccupation with the surging tide of communalism, discussion has inevitably veered round to defining the term communalism and what is usually perceived to be its opposite, secularism. It has been repeatedly emphasised by social scientists as well as politicians that while in Europe secularism has come to signify the State's indifference to all matters religious, in India its meaning is the very opposite, in that the State here is expected to treat all religions with equal respect. At the social level the sentiment of 'Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai*' is perceived as the negation of communalism.

The 'Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai*' sentiment has a history of at least five centuries behind it; some of the greatest of India's saint-poets, commanding impressive mass followings, had propagated and advanced this notion during the medieval centuries. At a time when conflicts within the various components of the ruling class could often take on communal colouring, 'Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai*' could preserve peace at the social level. This, partly because political processes in medieval centuries, unlike today, were to a far lesser extent based on mass

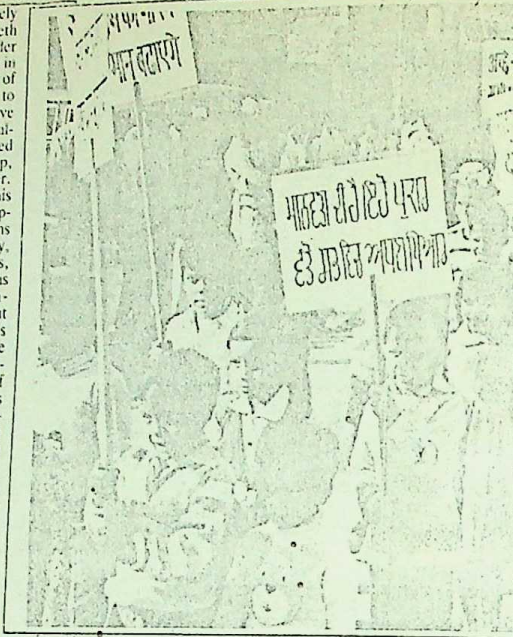
operative categories in an entirely changed context of the twentieth century, when a much wider choice is possible. It is thus that in any situation of an upsurge of communalism all we do is to sermonise on the need to preserve communal harmony. Communalism and secularism are perceived in a dichotomous relationship, one as the opposite of the other.

Within the parameters of this dichotomy, communalism supposedly represents the aspirations of any one religious community, especially in the arena of politics, and secularism is in turn seen as seeking to represent the aspirations of all communities, without bias towards any. Secularism is thus seen as smoothening the ridges of tension between communities and projecting for all of them a mutually harmonious struggle against a third enemy — imperialism before Independence and the threat to nation's unity afterwards.

Yet, evidently this medieval vision of 'secularism' has proved rather an ineffective weapon in the struggle against communalism during the twentieth century, both before and after independence. The communal demand for the partition of India did after all win the day and the rising curve of communal tension with every passing decade since Independence can hardly give comfort to those committed to the promotion of communal harmony.

In the communalism/secularism dichotomy, communalism is commonly identified at a point of tension, at a point where there is overt or veiled discrimination in favour of, or against, a person or a group for reasons of religious affinity; in an extreme and therefore more obvious case the manifestation of communalism occurs in the form of communal rioting. The absence of such tension is then understood as secularism. However, the problem with this vision is that it identifies communalism at one single locus, whereas in reality communalism comprises a range of positions; while in this vision cognisance of communalism is taken at a point of tension, its silent manifestation goes unnoticed.

The silent manifestation of communalism inheres in the very use of community as the category of social analysis and political operation. The use of this category — the treatment of Hindus as Hindus and Muslims as Muslims and so forth — allows of the following two strategies of political operation: a political party could either seek to consolidate support for itself among all communities by projecting the 'Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai*' vision. This would imply an assurance to the minorities that their religious



Marching for communal harmony: an act of faith

and cultural identity, apart from their economic interests, would be secure under the benign outlook of that party. This is the strategy that the Congress has always excelled in practising. Or else, a party could seek the support of a single community; in which case it would be natural to overstate the assumed hostility of other community or communities to one's own. This strategy is adopted by the Rashtriya Swayamsewa Sangh (RSS), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Muslim League, the Akali Dal etc.

Although these two strategies are presented to us as alternatives, they share with each other the basic unit of operation, namely the community, which remains the unit of political mobilisation in either case. Hence, far from being one-another's alternative, the two strategies together constitute a continuum, comprising the whole range of communal positions in all their manifestations.

However, an interchange of positions is possible. Recently there have been two excellent demonstrations of such interchange of positions and subsequent return to the original strategies. The Congress practically wiped out the BJP from the electoral scene first from Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in 1983, and soon after from Parliament, by adopting the latter's strategy; and having won the electoral bat-

tle on the BJP platform, it has resiled to the 'secular' Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai* approach. The BJP on its part, following its electoral debacle, made a brief experiment with the *bhai-bhai* strategy, but has recently thought it fit to reassert its earlier identity.

To a large extent this highly questionable communalism/secularism dichotomy is a legacy of the national movement when the two strategies, represented by the Muslim League and the Congress respectively, occupied the centre of the stage. Historically, the two organisations stood as one-another's alternatives; yet conceptually, operating with the same analytical category, they shared much with each other.

It was this large common ground that facilitated a smooth shift by individuals from one organisation to the other, then as now, some of the illustrious leaders of the Congress were simultaneously members of various professedly communal organisations. But, individuals apart, the organisations themselves often found common platforms for launching various agitations. And if the Muslim League's claim to being the exclusive representative of Muslim interests became too loud, all the Congress could think of was to launch the Muslim Mass Contact Programme, in which the Muslims were to be assured of the protection of their Muslim identity but

by Harbans Mukhia

mobilisation; hence the disjuncture between 'communal' conflict at the political level and communal peace at the social level remained by and large viable.

Thus even in the midst of massive conflicts between the medieval 'Muslim' state and leaders of several other religious groups such as the Marathas and Jat Hindus, Sikhs and of course the minority Shia groups in Golconda and Bijapur, and in spite of the occasional vigorous spurt of religious orthodoxy in state policy, instances of communal rioting, involving common people of different communities, remained extremely rare during the five-and-a-half centuries of 'Muslim' rule. Perhaps the first 'genuine' riot of this nature occurred towards the close of this period, in 1693 in Ahmedabad.

Partly also, owing to the absence of any conscious conceptual alternative to the operative category of community in medieval times, the political and social choice remained confined to either promoting communal conflict or communal harmony. The former was achieved by overstating the differences and points of tension between communities; the latter by highlighting their common features.

The problem today, however, arises from utilising the same op-



# Time to bell the cat

By SHEELA BARSE

**F**UTURE historians may identify 1985-87 as dark times for our country. These are critical times pregnant with frightening possibilities. Sadly, the media people with their allegiance to superficial investigation are keeping us engrossed in surface ripples. The intellectuals continue to be fond of the shelf. The evil forebodings are nobody's business.

The foremost crisis facing the country at social level today is communalism. The Hindu-Sikh amity is developing cracks. In some pockets, Hindus have begun to resent the Christian obsession with propagation of their religion. The breach between the Hindus and Muslims in the towns periodically lashed by communal storms, are widening. But the hour has not produced the leaders who would mend the fences.

On the contrary, there is a distinct possibility that the Hindu-Muslim divide may widen at different levels of the society. The belligerency may find violent expressions more often in the future. India 2000 may take the same road to torment as did Ireland and Lebanon.

The fear has its origin in the way the Shah Bano judgement is being wielded by all and sundry to sharpen communal consciousness. No doubt the nation is concerned with the question of maintenance rights of a Muslim divorcee. About 5 per cent of the population will be affected by the outcome of the debate. However, we must realise that the controversy is related to a community's roots and its senses of pride, and identity. Whether the Shariat has been interpreted expediently or selectively, cur-

ashtia. On 17th January, arson and looting followed the provocative slogan-shouting in front of a masjid by Shiv Sena, a regional, bigoted party demanding a uniform civil code. The Shiv Sena whose morchas and processions are notorious for rowdism, were shouting "Jo Chahe Pakistan, Use Bhejo Kabaristan". The implication perhaps was that if you cling to Islam, you might be loyal to the Islamic nation. The Muslims reacted with

communal lines. There would be sustained economic frustration among a sizable pocket of the population. The lives and properties affected were those of the lower strata. The capitalists suffered minor discomforts but their lives and properties were safe.

As the country moved towards development, the towns attracted migrant labour and kept them unorganised. This resulted in explosive situations. In what can be described as the third phase, cities which are the nerve centres of economic activity as also power politics, became vulnerable to violence spawned by communal intolerance. During the Hindu-Sikh riots in October 1984, the middle-classes and upper-classes suffered loss of property.

One of the greatest tragedies

of our country is that all parties and all leaders play upon communal sentiments to win elections whether to the local bodies, the state legislatures, or Parliament.

Communalism is an internal security problem. As such it should be considered next in importance only to national defence. The solution, therefore, could be that political parties, aided by experts should work out forums to re-examine communal issues from time to time.

The political parties should also work out a self-disciplining policy regarding election. If there is a major communal clash in an area, the corporator and the MLA of the area should not be given a ticket the next time.

The proposals may not be acceptable to all. But the time has come to bell the cat.

**Communalism is an internal security problem. As such it should be considered next only to national defence in importance.**

arson.

Five companies of the State Reserve Police were rushed to the spot. Intensive patrolling and strong police action has brought the situation under control. But absence of ripples in the township now is only surface deep.

A raktaheer has been sown in the soil (according to a myth, every drop of a rakshasi's blood transforms itself into a seed that produces a full fledged rakshasi). History has proved that communal violence begets more communal violence. Every communal riot leaves a bloody imprint in the memory of the people.

**Everyone from the intellectual to the ineffectual, the subtle bigot to crude politician, the paper pundit to the committed activist, is being allowed to comment on the dilemma.**

rectly or confusedly, the fact remains that a people have practised the preachings for several hundred years. Such deep roots cannot be wished away the moment activists or reformists or politicians declare it unacceptable.

Yet everyone from the intellectuals to the ineffectuals, the subtle bigots to crude politicians, the paper pundits to committed activists, the ruling partymen to retired judges, is being allowed to comment on the dilemma. The result is nervous hysteria among the different communities creating explosive possibilities.

The first flare-up has already scalded Aurangabad in Maharashtra.

Aligarh has nursed communal ill-will erupting into violence every now and then since the first post-Independence clash in 1950. Since the communal frenzy of 1969 which took 600 lives, Ahmedabad gets on the knife-edge again and again, Meerut, Ranchi, Agra, Jamshedpur, Moradabad, Jalgaon, continue to wound themselves periodically. New places are added to the list of communally volatile towns every now and then.

The basic patterns have changed too. Earlier there used to be some common denominators in the riot-prone towns. Twenty to fifty per cent of the towns population would be from the minority community. The colonies were developed along

H. T. 23-2-86







# THE MONSTER OF COMMUNALISM

by RAJENDRA SAREEN

THE three-day discussion in the Lok Sabha last week on the communal situation in various parts of the country was in keeping with the character of the recurring swell and ebb of the tide of violence that rocks the country from time to time.

The debate started in great form with a moving exhortation from the Speaker, Mr. Bal Ram Jakhar. Initiating the discussion, Mr. Madhu Dandavate made a powerful impact with his deep understanding and lucid presentation of the issues involved in the recrudescence of communal conflagrations. On the second day Mr. P. Chidambaram, Minister of State for Internal Security, put up a brilliant performance. On the third day the Home Minister, Mr. B. B. Singh, disappointed with his rambling, repetitive and lack-lustre reply to a discussion which clearly deserved a much better response.

It is a pity that the Prime Minister did not decide to respond to the debate himself. He could have underscored the national determination to deal firmly with this cancer in all its manifestations. One was reminded of the powerful impact made by his five-minute televised address to the nation when anti-Sikh riots had broken out in 1984 after the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The Prime Minister's speeches are sharp and incisive but his style is soothing and persuasive. He made a mistake in keeping away from the debate.

## COMMENT

The debate had its bright patches. It also had cliché-ridden incantations. But the main merit of the exercise was that the entire House spoke out with one voice against the threat posed by the monster of communalism to the unity and integrity of the nation. Even the dull moments of the debate unmistakably reaffirmed the members' total commitment to secularism and the need to curb communalism.

The Speaker set the tone for the discussion by his emphasis on the need to break the nexus between religion and politics. He spoke of "the soul-searing anguish caused by communal violence (which) is unbearable." He reminded the House that the country had "paid a terrible price for this malaise in 1947. But we have not been able to root it out in the past 38 years. Instead, it is beginning to strangle us. There is urgent need to ponder over this problem collectively so that all parties join hands to banish this evil flourishing in the name of religion. Let there be a stringent law prescribing condign punishment for the evil men who trigger off communal violence."

Mr. Madhu Dandavate was the first speaker which was clearly the pacesetter. He spoke of the need for a policy to ensure that the people's minds remained indivisible. He wanted everybody to try to distinguish between the disease and the symptoms so that the roots of the malaise were taken care of instead of dealing with the symptoms superficially.

Mr. Dandavate was in favour of the freedom of religious practices consistent with the spirit of secularism. His view religion is not a dogma. It is the aberration of the religion that comes in the way.

He spoke of the economic dimensions of communalism and the

need to synthesise religious and national identity. He also dealt with the social, political and administrative aspects of the fight against communalism and the maintenance of law and order.

## RIGHT APPROACH

Mr. Dandavate regretted that the problem was sought to be tackled through a fire-brigade approach (it is only when a fire breaks out that fire engines rush to the spot. They extinguish the fire and return to their depot. And then firemen take off their uniforms and relax).

The other points made by Mr. Dandavate were:

- (1) Reservations on a communal basis for recruitment to the police and paramilitary and military forces would tend to communalise them. These do, however, have to be restructured so that their composition broadly reflects the nature of society. On that there was complete unanimity in the National Integration Council between the Government and the Opposition.
- (2) On occasions when there are indications of explosive tension, ceremonial functions should be postponed so that the security forces can maintain law and order without being diverted to look after the V.I.P.s' security.
- (3) Communal violence is a fallout of gang wars and rivalries among smugglers, law-breakers and racketeers. Hoodlums are used as instruments of violence by anti-social elements. These elements should be rounded up.
- (4) The young should be made aware of the unifying role of religion. "We should teach the students not to become either atheists or religious bigots."
- (5) The fostering of composite culture is necessary.
- (6) Mixed community housing schemes and neighbourhood schools should be organised because segregated communal living is at the root of communal conflagrations.
- (7) Some balance has to be evolved between the religious feelings of people and the need to maintain peace and tranquillity. Rath yatras, Ganapati celebrations and Muharram are part of our religious tradition. Because a few hoodlums create disturbances, it would be wrong to ban them. But trouble spots can be avoided and the trouble-makers who have not much faith in religion but a vested interest in trouble can be isolated.
- (8) "I am not in favour of destroying history and I am not in favour of mutilating history, but history must be taught with a correct and balanced perspective."
- (9) "Political forces must try to overwhelm the communal and anti-social elements. I think it is a blot on all of us sitting here together that in times of communal conflagration we all have failed in spite of 100 years of the Congress tradition, in spite of the 50 years' tradition of the Socialist movement and in spite of a long tradition of the Communist movement. A very strong base for a regional party has been created in Andhra Pradesh. Even with all

the strong bases, when the volcano of communalism erupts all of us are thrown helter skelter and our capacity to contain the monster of communalism is reduced to an absolute nullity."

The Gujarat riots being the most recent eruption, the discussion was understandably dominated by the ghastly events in that State. The general view was that this was not a riot which had taken place on the spur of the moment and that it was planned and organised.

Mr. G. G. Swell pointed out that Gujarat, a coastal State, had to face large-scale smuggling. The smugglers had both power and muscle. Whenever there was a breakdown of law and order, these anti-social elements stood to benefit. It was, therefore, necessary to round them up to ensure that they did not create trouble.

Mr. Swell reminded the House that India was the one country in Asia, besides Japan, where real democracy prevailed. "The vastness, the size, the diversity and the built-in contradictions that India has in terms of differences in religions, languages and economic disparities could have torn this country apart. And yet we have grown from strength to strength in democracy. We have been able to do this because the different communities have understood that in living together lies the salvation not only of this country but also of each individual. If we are not able to control and contain the conflicts within the country, these would grow into such monsters as would destroy us."

Mr. Amal Datta (C.P.I.) posed the following question: "Has not the time come to put some fetters on the unlimited religious freedom practised in public in such a way that it not only causes inconvenience or annoyance to others but also leads to arson, communal disturbances, and loss of life and property?"

Mr. Jagan Nath Kaushal was of the view that "if the political will is there, no terrorism, communalism or extremism can prevail". He thought Parliament should seriously consider the making of a law to ban communal parties and debar them from contesting elections.

## ALLEGATION

Some members related how communal passions were aroused by the Vishva Hindu Parishad on the "Ram Janambhoomi" issue by telling the Hindus: "You are impotent cowards. Your God is under lock and key and you are keeping quiet."

A Muslim member asked: "What will happen if the Muslims lose faith in the system and take up arms for their security? Some Muslims talk of becoming terrorists like Sikhs."

Mr. Ranjit Singh Gaekwad felt that numerous Hindu organisations cropping up everywhere indicated that the majority community was feeling "unsure, unsafe and neglected." In his view the politicians "who instead of quietly working for the minorities are making too much fuss are preventing the improvement of relations between the minority community and the majority community".

As against that, the Majlis-e-

Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen member from Hyderabad, Mr. Sultan Sahabuddin Owaisi, said: "Our feelings are being outraged. Each riot leaves a trail of destruction for the minorities. Innocent people are subjected to harassment in the aftermath. The P.A.C. resorts to the looting of houses, the ravaging of women and the breaking of bones. When complaints are made we are told that the police must not be demoralised."

Just when the discussion appeared to be getting into a rut, Mr. P. Chidambaram intervened to remind the House that the "whole nation is being held to ransom by a small number of people. Let the members of Parliament go back to their respective States and assert that secular, progressive, catholic and non-sectarian forces will continue to command and occupy the middle ground with the allegiance and support of the people."

## GUIDELINES

The main points made by Mr. Chidambaram were:

(1) The guidelines prepared in 1950 and revised in 1965 had so far been accepted by 16 States. But these had been honoured more in their breach than in their observance. Had there been the necessary political will to implement them strictly, much of the communal violence people had seen could have been avoided.

(2) As the cadre-controlling authority for the I.A.S. and the I.P.S., the Central Government is going to hold the District Magistrate and the S.P. directly responsible for incidents of communal violence.

(3) Curbs and restraints should be imposed on religious processions which must be simple and symbolic and should avoid such routes as are sensitive.

(4) The indiscriminate use of loudspeakers has the potential of creating communal tension and it is necessary to regulate their use in the interest of the maintenance of communal harmony and peace.

(5) The Centre will monitor the recruitment from the minority communities into the police and paramilitary forces.

(6) The training of the armed constabulary men in the States will be streamlined to ensure that the communal bias is removed and these formations inculcate the right attitude and correct the usual approach to various situations.

(7) Special courts will be constituted to hold speedy trials of those who are involved in engineering communal riots.

The point that stood out in the discussion was that religious orthodoxy and obscurantism were out to assert themselves aggressively.

The question is: why is the political system unable to cope with this menace when most of the parties are committed to the ideal of secularism? The members of the Lok Sabha did not touch this aspect direct.

Herein lies the key to the problem. With political processes paralysed at the grassroots level, there is no scope for interaction among the various political factors. Each one of them stands insulated from the others except at the time of clashing. Unless this malaise is cured there cannot be a reversal of the evil trend.







## Readers' Reactions

A large number of readers have reacted to the articles and news items on the communal situation published in this newspaper in recent weeks. For lack of space, it is not possible to print even a fraction of this correspondence. Moreover, most letters make the same points over and over again, often in intemperate language which is not conducive to reasoned debate. We have therefore decided to give only a sampling of the opinions expressed in the letters. This brings to a close the discussion in our columns provoked by the articles and news items. — Editor.

## THE HINDU-MUSLIM PROBLEM

by Girilal Jain (October 8)

*Mr Syed Shahabuddin, New Delhi:*

The point of departure in Mr Jain's analysis is that on August 15, 1947, the Hindus came into their own. I think it is the Indian people, who, with all their diversities, came into their own. And without in any way detracting from the Hindu contribution to the making of India, its polity, economy, society, civilisation and culture, the present is the common heritage of all Indians and the future the common task of all Indians. Hence one cannot agree with Mr Jain's apathy towards what happens to the Muslim Indians.

*Mr S. S. Sathu, Jammu:* The Hindu has accepted the reality that the Muslims of India are a part of the nation. But there lies a huge responsibility on our Muslim brothers also to see that the sooner the hurt sentiments of their Hindu brothers are soothed, the better it will be for both.

*Mr Zafar Ahmad, Patna:* Even an enlightened Muslim fails to understand how a group of people to whom the very idea of equality and brotherhood till very recently happened to be almost alien ideas can become secular overnight. The irony is that those who do not have the strength to cling to their own ground owing to the inherent weaknesses of their creed tend to blame others in the name of non-adaptability and orthodoxy.

*Mr Bilal Ahmad, Saharanpur:* The question is simple: "What are the constituents of the Indian Nation?" If Mr Girilal Jain and the intellectuals of his kind do not think of Muslim Indians as an integral constituent of the Indian nation, and if they do not think that the great cultural heritage of Islamic hue has deep roots in the evolutionary process of Indian nationhood, then certainly the ghost of Mr Jinnah looms large in their sub-conscious. These intellectuals must note that the so-called Hindutva cannot create a cohesive Indian nationhood as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Azad and embodied in the basic structure of the Indian Constitution.

*Mr M. K. Bakshi, New Delhi:* Terrorism and communalism are the two evils which find nourishment in appeasement. When it is clear to them that their demands shall never be accepted and that they are sure to end up in loss of life and property, they cannot but give up. They are more unreasonable and demanding where opposing forces are weak, wavering and complacent. They are tough when we are soft. In approach they are consistent and steadfast, we are casual and oscillating.

## COMMUNAL TWIST

Letter to The Editor from Romila Thapar and 11 other historians (October 21)

*Mr Jayant Patel, New Delhi:* An

convert the monuments, why not do the same with persons too. Let us probe into the geneology of individuals and trace their original religion centuries ago and reconvert them to their original religion?

*K. Roy, Bhubaneswar:* By trying to introduce a third dimension to the problem, in the shape of imaginary Buddhist, Jaina and animist shrines, the letter has tried to create a historical confusion in the name of historical analysis. The letter has questioned the historicity of Krishna and consequently the very concept of his birth place. When millions of Indians believe in the historicity of Shri Krishna and observe his birthday, dismissing the matter in such a light manner, is unfair to a large number of people.

*Syed Shahabuddin, New Delhi:* The letter mentions the Muslim demand "for the restoration to worshippers of dis-used mosques now under the care of the Archaeological Survey of India". I am not aware of any demand for the restoration of protected mosques to worshippers but there is a demand for the recognition of freedom of worship in protected mosques which has been curbed only recently.

There are any number of historic places of worship in our own country and abroad which are in live use, day and night, as places of worship. I could cite the Jagannath Temple at Puri, the Meenakshi Temple at Madurai, the Harimandir Sahib at Amritsar, the Jama Masjid in Delhi, the Cathedral in Canterbury and St. Peters in Rome. How does the concept of a living monument conflict with historic or archaeological interest? The Muslim demand is not communal but religious; the refusal is not rational but communal.

*V. Sagar, New Delhi:* Romila Thapar and her colleagues often nation has to have its ethos and all the places associated with it are part of the national heritage. Both Ram and Krishna were national, and not communal, heroes.

*Thakur Onkar Singh Charak, New Delhi and 11 others:* The government should appoint a commission of top historians and archaeologists to find out the truth about monuments. Are the signatories of the said letter prepared to support his eminently reasonable suggestion?

*Afroz Alam Shaheen, New Delhi:* The enlightened group of historians has done the right thing by pointing out that the way you have tackled such a volatile issue on the front page of your newspaper and then entertained biased and communal correspondence in response to it does not render service to the nation.

*Mohinder Singh, New Delhi:* The historians, who belong to different communities but do not think in terms of communal identities, have done well by mentioning the little known fact that political and economic reasons have been the main motivating force behind various attacks on the Hindu tem-

Indian masses that to seek a religion-free politics in India is to look for a politics unrelated to its social context. To my mind, therefore, the Indian variety of secularism cannot be established by denying the communal and caste reality. It needs to come to grips with the problem.

*Dr B. S. Sanyal, Varanasi:* Macaulayans such as Mr Adhikari with a glow of full literacy in their eyes, have had a long innings of lecturing the Hindus on secularism, the term being used not in the plain sense of equality before law irrespective of caste, creed and colour but in the sense of not mixing of politics with religion. They forget that this dictum is a part of their decadent culture, religion and ideology named liberal humanism, adam smithianism and capitalism. They also forget that politics of any kind of ideology is an integral part of the corresponding kind of religion or cultural system.

*Mr Rajendra Prasad Jain, Muzaffarnagar:* Mr. Adhikari does not explain why the cutting of a problem is secular and why the breaking of coconut or lighting the lamps non-secular. Like every new religion it decries all the old religions and seeks to impose its own history, culture, rituals, language and literature.

*Madhav Prasad Agrawal, Rawat:* Why does Mr Adhikari want to impose an ideology most alien to us? He has looked only to European ideology and shut his eyes on India and the Indian people. He must know that the theory of Western secularism implies a 'hatred for religion', a negative approach, whereas Indian secularism is calls for 'respect for religion'. We should not be overawed by names like St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus and Ockhams. We Indians know nothing about them and it is better that Mr Adhikari keeps them in his own pocket. Please let us have our Nehru and Gandhi.

*A. K. Dogra, Jalandhar City:* It is very strange that Mr Gautam Adhikari is allergic even to coconut breaking and lighting of sacred lamps, and considers these as religious actions. Well, these actions are part of our national culture and our national heritage. Should we reject them because some minority groups do not like them?

*Ganesh Singh, Muzaffarnagar:* To say that to awake, arouse and organise the Hindus is unjustified because "their religion or existence is not threatened by Muslims" at present is to say that trying to build up one's health when there is no imminent fear of any disease is not justified. Awakening, consciousness and organisation are the signs of a healthy society. If the Hindus are attempting to attain that nobody should feel scared or grudge it.

*Mahinder Singh, New Delhi:* Hindu and Sikh communalism



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intellectuals such as these twelve signatories of the letter in question who by their anti-Hindu stance have done maximum harm to the cause of national unity and national integration.

Mr S. A. Jacob, Mr Bijoy Chaliha and Mr J. P. Kumar, New Delhi: Since independence this country's struggle to find its moorings has been hampered by various categories of "intellectuals" whose concern it has been throughout to establish their own "secular" image. At every step they have sought to decry any genuine endeavour aimed at strengthening India. In the Nehru era they did not spare even Jawaharlal Nehru when he tended to rouse a sense of pride in India's past. During Indira Gandhi's last years they sought to paint her as a Hindu communalist at heart just because she wanted to rouse people's awareness of their duties as Indians.

Mr Sita Ram Goel, New Delhi: The professors have come out at one go with a series of final pronouncements on many points touching upon India's history and culture. Readers are likely to infer that the evidence in support of their conclusions can be found in their own and allied writings. I am not exaggerating at all when I say that I have read almost all these books but am still looking for the evidence, particularly in support of their pet thesis that Hindus destroyed Buddhist and Jain temples. As regards the rest of their propositions, their writings contradict in one context what has been propounded in another.

Ms Vimal Sharma and Ms Urvashi Dalal, Rohtak: The report of September 15 on "Krishna's Birth Place After Aurangzeb" is a deliberate advocacy of unhistorical facts. In Aurangzeb's time the Keshva Dev Bundela Temple had become an asylum for conspiracies of the Jat rebels. The temple was always a constant source of trouble to the emperor as it was very close to the capital city Delhi. Had it been a general policy of Aurangzeb to demolish all the Hindu temples then why did he demolish only a few and granted, as it is proved by a recent firman from Mandu, revenue of some village for the maintenance of temple in Mandu?

S. V. S. Iyer, Balkundrá (Bihar): I fully endorse the views expressed by M/s. Romila Thapar and others. I think religious frenzy seems to be gripping us Indians and we are always on the look out for some weapon or other to strike followers of other faiths. If we wish to re-

Aurangzeb. While writing the story on the history of Gurdwara Sis-Ganj I came across an old letter in the Delhi State Archives which states that during the last days of Aurangzeb's rule some sort of monument in memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur had come up at the place where the Guru was beheaded. This means that even during the time of Aurangzeb new temples, both Hindu and Sikh, were being constructed. The Jain Temple in Chandni Chowk contains in its collection a land grant from the days of Aurangzeb giving them permission to build the temple there. There might be a number of other examples if one tries to carefully cull out such evidence from the old records. I think not only *The Times of India* but other leading newspapers in the country also have a positive role to play in the prevailing atmosphere surcharged with communal passions. Instead of playing with religious sentiments they need to act with caution in the interest of the country as a whole. The initiative taken by the country's top historians in putting matters straight needs support from all right-thinking people in the country.

#### SECULARISM AND HINDUISM

by Gautam Adhikari  
(October 18)

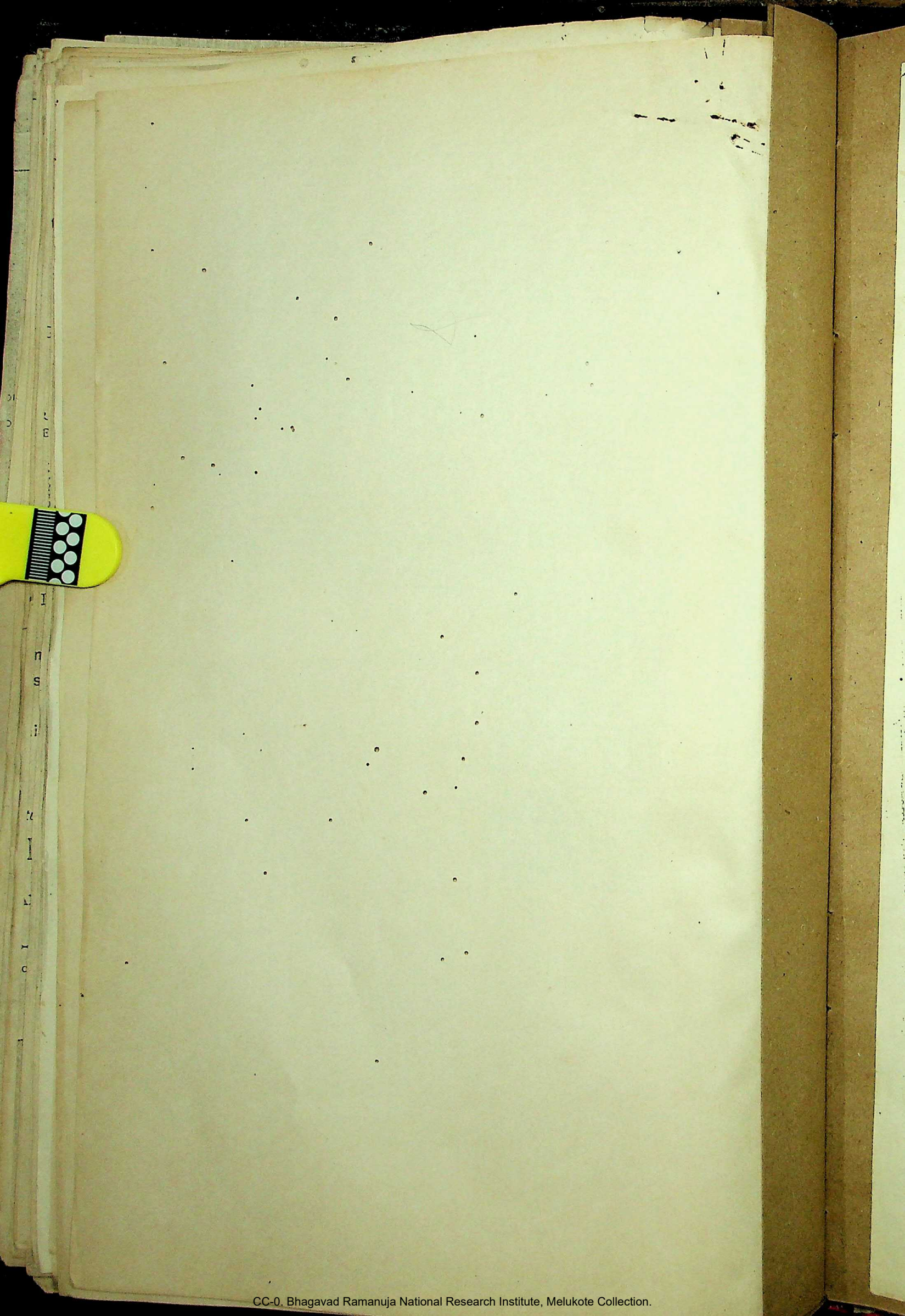
Mr Nilotpal Mrinal, New Delhi: The circumstances in which we became independent was not at all congenial for establishing a truly secular state. Even today, religion has such deep roots among the

written in the Gurmukhi script and the gurdwara observed that several of the marble slabs donated by devotees in memory of their dead, had inscriptions in Punjabi, Urdu or English language but not in Hindi. He did not realise that most donors, who were doubtless Sikhs, being cross with Hindus on the language issue, preferred a non-Hindi language for their slabs.

Mr R. P. Singh, Delhi: It is a pity that people who regard themselves the leaders of the intelligentsia should have talked of redressing past historical misdeeds committed by a handful of Muslim rulers. Their positive contribution to the social and cultural life of the country, architecture and music is of no account to this school of thinking... You will not easily admit it but taking advantage of the Sikh situation your editorial policy of late has swung in favour of Hindu communalists. Publication of letters critical of your editorials is no proof of secularism.

Mr Ramchandra Gandhi, New Delhi: It would be perfectly proper to think of India as a Hindu secular state or as an *Adi secular state* which is not the same thing, be it noted, as a Hindu state or an Adivasi state... On an off-shore island equidistant from centres of world power let India set up a statue of Aditi, indivisible Mother of the Gods, massive and muscular in aboriginal conception, with an upturned arrow in one hand and a flute in the other, a gift of peace of the aboriginal civilisation of India to the future of life on earth.









A part from learning about our doctrines, we should learn about our churches and our priests. How do people become 'Swami so-and-so', 'Bhagwan so-and-so' among the Hindus? How do they become 'Baba so-and-so', and 'Sant so-and-so' among the Sikhs? All of us turn to the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid in Delhi. Has he acquired the honour by virtue of his piety or learning? Or is it another one of those inherited posts? How many of these religious heads owe their current post, as the Syedna does, to the decisions of sundry magistrates? Even more than the manner of ascending to or acquiring the status or post, what is their social practice? If a 'religious' head is acquiring petrol pumps from politicians in return for delivering block votes or if, like the head of the *math* in Bodhi Gaya, he is into amassing real estate, should that not alter our predisposition to revere all and sundry among them? What is the mark of a man of God, the office he occupies or the service he renders? As Jesus said to his disciples (*Luke 27:24-7*) when a dispute arose among them at the Last Supper as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest, 'For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves.'

#### EXAMINE THE BOOK

There was a time when the only way to justify a rule was to assert that it had been ordained directly by God. Thus we have Manu claiming that

## SECULARISM UNDER SIEGE

WEEKLY ESSAY/ARUN SHOURIE

Though we have enshrined the concept of secularism in our Constitution, in recent times it has come under severe strain with the rise of fundamentalism everywhere.

Against this disquieting backdrop, Arun Shourie, in this second of a three-part essay from the forthcoming publication, *Religion in Politics*, published by Roli Books International, advocates a different role for theologians than the mere notation of similarities and differences of faiths. In a fascinating exposition, Shourie argues against the one basic tenet of religious fundamentalism—that every word in each religious text is divinely inspired. He provides innumerable instances of conflicting versions of the same incident among different holy books of the same faith.

his statutes have been created by Brahma. Himself, we have Moses bringing the tablets down from the mountain, we have the Bible ascribing everything to God and His Son, we have the Prophet claiming that the Quran which was revealed to him by Allah through the angel Gabriel was a reproduction of the original which is lying in heaven. Divine ordination was the necessary sanction. (It was not always the

sufficient one as is evident from the fact that ever so often a great deal of physical force had to be used to make people adhere to the decrees.)

Now, this sanction could be enforced only by insisting that every word that had come down from Brahma, or God, or Allah was true, eternal, excellent. Hence the claims on behalf of the Bible and the Quran among the *ahl al kitab*. As invariably happens, once the respective churches were founded, what had been

claimed on behalf of the Book—literal inerrancy, eternal infallibility—was soon claimed on behalf of the churches, the *ulama*, and the Pope. These claims both for the respective books and the priests survive to this day, and are at the root of intolerance and reaction, as well as of heteronomy among followers.

We must therefore examine the



infallibility that are made  
 of religion and are be-  
 the faithful. What did the  
 and the texts prophesy and  
 things turn out in fact? The  
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 the second coming was to  
 an place within the lifetime  
 of Jesus' companions. That  
 not happen became, as  
 chauer noted, an embarrass-  
 en to Peter and Paul. Simi-  
 every statement of fact in the  
 about the cosmos, geogra-  
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 estament the genealogy of Jesus is  
 even in two places—once in the  
 Gospel according to *Matthew*, and  
 once in the Gospel according to  
*Luke*. Both give the names beginning  
 from David down to Joseph, the  
 husband of Virgin Mary, the mother  
 of Jesus. On *Matthew's* reckoning  
 David is followed serially by 25  
 heirs—whom he lists—before we get  
 to Joseph. On *Luke's*, by 40. And  
 apart from the first and the last  
 names in the series—ie, the names  
 David and Joseph—our authors have  
 not one name in common. It can't  
 that the names of who succeeded  
 who are common and that it is just  
 that in a few places the order is  
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 Moreover, as Paine asked, what is  
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 Jesus, being the Son of God, and

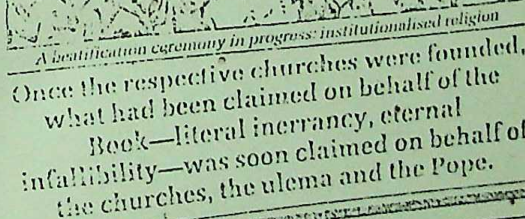


cond, the internal evidence of Books themselves shows that "ry word" in them just cannot be. The Bible gives two accounts of creation; the accounts differ. It attributes its "books" to Moses, Isaiah but on its own showing several the events narrated in each of m took place long after, in some es hundreds of years after, the posed author had died. At one ce (*Mark*, 2.26) David enters the use of God and eats the leaves of tering under the high priest biathar. At another (*1 Samuel*, 21.1 c) this occurs not under Abiathar at his father, Ahimelach. In one lace *Matthew* (27.9) attributes a rophecy to Jeremiah and at another 11.12) to Zachariah. In the New estament the genealogy of Jesus is ven in two places—once in the ospel according to *Matthew*, and once in the Gospel according to *Luke*. Both give the names beginning from David down to Joseph, the husband of Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus. On *Matthew's* reckoning David is followed soriatim by 25 heirs—whom he lists—before we get to Joseph. On *Luke's*, by 40. And apart from the first and the last names in the series—ie, the names David and Joseph—our authors have *not one name* in common. It isn't that the names of who succeeded who are common and that it is just that in a few places the order is different. *Not one name in one list so much as occurs in the other.* Moreover, as Paine asked, what is the point of listing the 25 or the 40? Jesus, being the Son of God, and

In *Mark*, *Luke* and *John* we hear no more about Judas. But in *Matthew* (27.3-5) Judas repents when he sees the result of his betrayal and

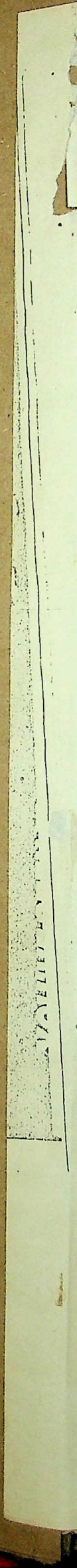
*John* tells us nothing about the attitude of the two thieves who are

Over the last three hundred years, considerations such as these have led even devout scholars to conclude that the authors were not as concerned in each instance to record what actually happened, but to create the overall situation in a way



Once the respective churches were founded, what had been claimed on behalf of the Book—literal inerrancy, eternal infallibility—was soon claimed on behalf of the churches, the ulema and the Pope.







hat would reinforce the central message of faith. They now hold that it is not 'the literal inerrancy' that we must look for, in, say, the Bible but the integrity of the overall mind-set of faith which the authors create through the dramatic situations they construct.

There is much to be said for this view as there can be no doubt at all about the enormous impact that each of the four Gospels has on the reader, non-Christian and Christian alike. The contradictions or differences in regard to specific details are as nothing when set against this impact. But, while it is entirely correct to focus on the overall impact of the narrative, and to realise that this is what was the concern of the narrators, in urging that we focus on the overall impact rather than on the precise details, on 'the atmosphere' that the words create rather than on the words themselves, we are clearly discarding the position that every single word of the text is the truth, nothing but the truth and the whole truth. By focusing on the overall impact rather than on 'the literal inerrancy' we are saying in effect that the authors of the Gospels are not to be looked upon as chroniclers listing what transpired but as dramatists, each concerned with making the particular event he is portraying most effective, with making the particular speech that is being delivered at that moment most evocative without bothering about whether what he is setting down conforms to or contradicts what other dramatists have written about that scene or speech, or what in fact happened.

The next fact that stands out, however, forces us to move beyond this realisation too. Often the Books treat of the same events. Now, each is sacred. Each is said to be from God. Every word in each is said to be true, and eternally so. What is one to do then when they differ with each other in their account of the same event? A simple example will have to suffice. Jesus is mentioned in 15 suras of the Quran. Ninety-three verses deal directly with him. The annunciation of the Virgin and the birth of Jesus is differentiated at one place (*Quran*, 19.17)—an angel comes and informs the Virgin that God has decided to make a sign of her (ie, that He has decided to perform an extraordinary thing, a miracle through her so that people realise His, to God's greatness) by having her, a virgin, bear a son who shall be perfect etc. At other places (*Quran*, 21.9, 66.12) the two events are telescoped into one so that God is represented as both telling her and putting the child in her. Mary subsequently gives birth to Jesus near the trunk of a palm tree (*Quran*, 19.22-34). The Quran informs us again and again that Jesus, while a prophet, was not the son of God (for instance, 3.51-5; 4.169; 5.19-21; 5.76-9; 9.30;

19.35-6; 43.57-65). In the Gospels Jesus does not reveal the nature of his mission to his companions till after a long period of preparation. In the Quran (3.41, 19.30) he proclaims it from the cradle itself. Most important, it reports that Jesus was not crucified at all, that the one the Jews slew on the cross was just a look-alike (*Quran*, 4.154-9). As Jesus was not killed, there was no occasion for subsequent events like the resurrection etc.

The devout Christian is liable to find the 'reasons' that the Quran gives for concluding, for instance, that Jesus was not the son of God, to be just as unconvincing as the devout Muslim is liable to find puerile the 'reasons' that one may extract from the Bible for the proposition that he was the Son of God. The Quran says, for instance, that it is wrong to attribute a son to God as the latter has no consort (6.101; 112.3). But, surely, a Being who can endow a virgin with a son so as to make a sign of her so that men believe in Him, in, in Allah, a Being who can create the entire cosmos, including time and space, out of nothing, should be able to create a son out of nothing too. Similarly, the Quran says that it is a sin to ascribe a son to God, 'when it becometh not for the God of Mercy to beget a son' (19.91-3). But why is it *seemly* for God to have prophets, apostles, messengers (on whom He lavishes extraordinary care to the point of always rushing to get them out of their personal predicaments), and *unseemly* for Him to have a son? Why is it *seemly* for God to have evil and suffering among His creations and *unseemly* to have a son among them?

Are the 'reasons' of the Quran as much as the Bible not something else altogether? The Bible must affirm that Jesus is the Son of God so as to exalt him to his unique position, a position so unique that a religion can be founded after him. For exactly the same reason the Quran must insist that he was not the Son of God, for the same reason it must deny the central event of Christian martyrology, namely, that he was crucified: if it accepts these affirmations it cannot create for Mohammed the unique position it must if it is to found an entire religion on the latter.

The Prophet of course did say that Jesus will come again, but it is unlikely that Christians would adopt his account of the second coming. The Prophet says that Jesus will descend once again ('soon' in one tradition, at 'the last hour' in others), that he will be 'a just judge', 'and will break crosses, kill swine, abolish the jizya, and leave the young she-camels so that collectors of zakat will not be employed for them', that 'he will marry, have children, and remain forty-five years, after which he will die and be



The unending saga of communal violence: product of religious bigotry

buried along with me in my grave. Then Jesus son of Mary and I will arise from one grave between Abu Bakr and Umar' (*Mishkat al-Masabih*, Book XXVI, Chapter 6). Furthermore, on the Day of Judgement, we are told, Jesus will be a witness against the Christian. He will testify to the grave sin they have committed by putting him and Mary at par with God.

All this strikes at the very roots of the message conveyed in the New Testament. Both sets of accounts are equally revered, equally authentic. But in view of diametrically opposing assertions such as these they cannot both be literally and simultaneously true. And the examples can be multiplied many times over.

## THE SECULAR APPROACH TO THE BOOK

The book is thus a ladder, not a fence, a scaffolding, not a prison. The believer who merely chants, 'Every word of it is true,' is foregoing the benefits that one may derive from the Book just as much as the ostentatious non-believer who just keeps shouting, 'It is all a fable.' Neither is reliving the experience that the texts enshrine, neither is letting the texts address him. We should approach the texts with an open mind, a receptive one, and, instead of making the Book an object either of superstitious reverence or of exhibitionist 'taking apart', we

should appropriate it, reading it creatively, meditating on it creatively, looking at a passage this way today and that way tomorrow.

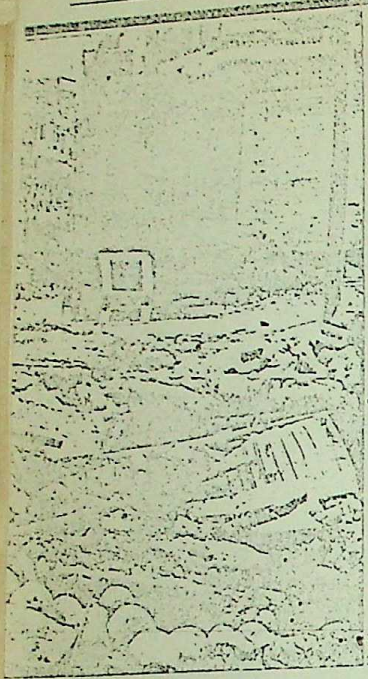
The humanist and secular attitude to all texts can only be as follows:

- Every Book is man-made;
- Each of the Books we revere has much that is valuable, but also much that is dated, and much that is just not tenable;
- Each of us has the right—and, in the poisoned air of today, the duty—to study and interpret each Book;
- Our surest guide in doing so is direct experience and not the *dictat* of some intermediary; in particular, most of us have a greater capacity to understand and interpret the texts than the professional priests and theologians, and an infinitely greater capacity to do so than the politicians who hector us in the name of religion.

Because of the nature of the Hindu tradition, because of the special position that the mystic—to whom books are nothing, and direct perception everything—has had in it, and also because of the work of the great reformers of that tradition—Vivekananda, Dayananda, Anandabha, Gandhi and others—these propositions are well accepted in relation to the Hindu texts. The humanist and secularist must extend them to the other texts too.

It is only when we acquire this





Ever so often we go about contriving 'the essential unity of all religions' by picking seemingly similar passages from the different texts. Thus a Vinoba publishes an entire book, *The Essence of the Quran*, bowdlerising all the blood-curdling cries for jihad.

freedom in relation to a Book that we can benefit from it. It is only when we acquire this freedom in relation to all the Books that we will be enriched by what is valuable in each. It is only when we appropriate all the Books in this way that each Book, instead of dividing us, will become our common heritage. It is only in this way that we will learn to, and acquire the self-confidence to, differentiate the external, the adventitious which divides us from the essential that can benefit us all.

But a word of caution is necessary. Ever so often we go about contriving 'the essential unity of all religions' by picking seemingly similar passages from the different texts. Thus a Vinoba publishes an entire book, *The Essence of the Quran*, bowdlerising all the blood-curdling cries for jihad, sanitising out every verse that enjoins eternal, uncompromising hostility to the non-believers.

Such selectivity, even when it is inspired by the highest motives, won't work. The faithful, after all, will read the Quran and not the well-meaning compiler's *Essence of the Quran*. And the others, were they to go by the *Essence*, would be misled as to the mind, the world-view that the text forms.

In contrast to the honey-and-syrup school of selectivity, I would urge that in reading, interpreting, appropriating the texts

- We go by the entire text, and not by the isolated verse;

- We go by the primary text and not the commentaries;
- We go by the plain, manifest meaning of the text and the passage, and not by the convoluted construction put on it by theologians and priests;
- We go not by the effect that an isolated passage is liable to have on the believer, but on the mind-set, the world-view that is liable to result from the text as a whole;
- Finally, that we go by the entire corpus of texts and not by just this single volume or that.

By proceeding thus, will we, as Aurobindo would say, break out of 'ecclesiastical tyranny'. It is by acquiring this freedom towards the Book that we will break the rival millenarian claim of the religions. Once the millenarian claim is undermined, the religion will not be able to demand total, unreasoning obedience. And once it cannot demand that, it will be much less able to set us at each other's throats.

#### THE CHURCH AND THE PRIEST

After comparing what the Books say about the universe, about the geography and evolution of the earth, about history in one place with what they say in another, after comparing what one sacred Book says about the matter with what another equally sacred one says, after comparing what all of them say

with what we now know about the matter, the programme of secular education should catalogue the positions that have been enunciated, indeed enforced in the name of religion by the religious establishments. A syllabus of Errors to match that of Pope Pius IX should be prepared setting out what was insisted upon and enforced about the solar system from the times of Giordano, Bruno, Copernicus, Galileo, what was insisted upon about the evolution of man a century ago, what is being enforced today, say on the matter of contraception setting out assertions such as the one that it was sacrilegious to use anaesthetics to alleviate the pains of the mother in childbirth—the scripture having decreed, 'In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children' (*Genesis*, III-16)—while it was permissible to use them while operating on men (as the Lord Himself had put Adam into deep sleep before extracting the rib), setting out notions such as the one that there are witches and it is one's bounden duty to exterminate them—the scripture having enjoined, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live' (*Exodus*, XXII-18)—and the propositions certified by the Council of Trent that original sin is transmitted through procreation, that ordination leaves an indelible mark on the soul.

The catalogue must also list the considerations on account of which the custodians of religious truth have propagated, and tenaciously held on to such notions. The position of the Vatican on contraception is a case in point. 'It amounts to thwarting God's will,' say successive encyclicals and five successive Popes. Surely that can't be the reason. After all, they have officially sanctioned surgery, including heart transplants. The reason is to be found in the authoritarian nature of the organisation; such an organisation must keep a hand in the most intimate activities of those under its sway, for only by making them heed it in an activity that personal can it establish the notion that is the *sine qua non* of its authority—the notion that there is no inviolate sphere of autonomy for the individual. This is the reason why successive Councils and Popes, having altered, amended, even shed so much, hold on to the archaic view on this singular matter. And then there is the 'reason' that they just cannot acknowledge that the Pope and the Church have erred for so long in the face of so much well-intentioned counsel to the contrary. The authority of the Church rests on the proposition that the Pope is infallible. And the reason on account of which he is infallible is that, being the successor to Peter, he is at all times being directly guided by the Holy Spirit. Five Popes having affirmed over half a century that contraception violates 'natural law', 'the will of God', to now acknow-

ledge that the correct position is the opposite would strike at the very basis of the claim to Papal infallibility, and hence, at the very basis of the authority of the Church. The minority of the Papal Commission on birth control (the minority whose position the Pope adopted, rejecting the position arrived at by the majority of the Commission he had himself appointed) put the matter squarely: 'What weighs more heavily, however, is that this change (in the Church's position on birth control) would involve a heavy blow to the doctrine of the assistance of the Holy Spirit promised the Church to lead the faithful on the right way toward their salvation... For the Church to have erred so gravely in its grave responsibility of leading souls would be seriously suggesting that the assistance of the Holy Spirit was lacking to her.'

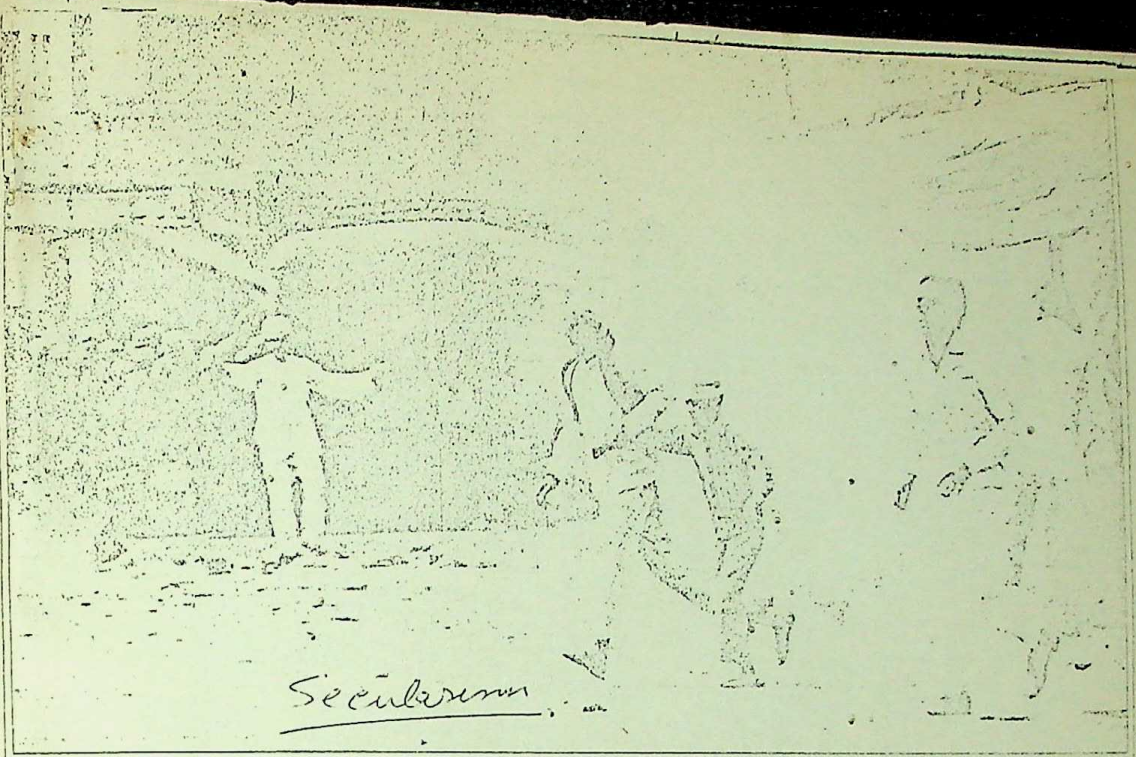
Indeed it would amount to saying that the Holy Spirit had been guiding the enemies of the Pope and his Church, that is Protestants and the like. As has been well put,

'If contraception were declared not intrinsically evil, in honesty it would have to be that the Holy Spirit in 1930 (in reference to the encyclical, *Casti Connubii*), in 1951 (in reference to the address of Pius XII to midwives) and 1958 (in reference to his address to the Society of Haematologists), assisted the Protestant Churches, and that for half a century did not protect Pius XI, Pius XII and a large part of the Catholic hierarchy against a very grave error, one most pernicious to souls; for it would have suggested that they condemned most imprudently, under the pain of eternal punishment, thousands upon thousands of human acts which were now approved. Indeed, it can be neither denied nor ignored that these acts would be approved for the same fundamental reasons which Protestants alleged and which they (popes and bishops) condemned or at least did not approve.'

Saving face may be an exclusively eastern preoccupation, saving authority however seems to be a western concern too!

A *Syllabus of Errors* of this kind will establish that infallibility which cannot now be claimed for the Book can be claimed even less for the Church and the Priest, that the Book is just an aid—a ladder to be used up to a stage and then discarded—and that to benefit from the aid direct experience, direct experimentation is what is necessary, the intermediation of the Church and the Priest is not. It will teach us the each of the techniques, each of the assertions of the Books, Churches, Priests, must be examined on its merits. In no case must their veto their embargo or their certificate be accepted without scrutiny.





*Secularism*

A part from learning about our doctrines, we should learn about our churches and our priests. How do people become 'Swami so-and-so', 'Bhagwan so-and-so' among the Hindus? How do they become 'Baba so-and-so', and 'Sant so-and-so' among the Sikhs? All of us turn to the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid in Delhi. Has he acquired the honour by virtue of his piety or learning? Or is it another one of those inherited posts? How many of these religious heads owe their current post, as the Syedna does, to the decisions of sundry magistrates? Even more than the manner of ascending to or acquiring the status or post, what is their social practice? If a 'religious' head is acquiring petrol pumps from politicians in return for delivering block votes or if, like the head of the *math* in Bodhi Gaya, he is into amassing real estate, should that not alter our predisposition to revere all and sundry among them? What is the mark of a man of God, the office he occupies or the service he renders? As Jesus said to his disciples (*Luke 27:24-27*) when a dispute arose among them at the Last Supper as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest, 'For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves.'

#### EXAMINE THE BOOK

There was a time when the only way to justify a rule was to assert that it had been ordained directly by God. Thus we have Mann claiming that

## SECULARISM UNDER SIEGE

THE WEEKLY ESSAY/ARUN SHOURIE

Though we have enshrined the concept of secularism in our Constitution, in recent times it has come under severe strain with the rise of fundamentalism everywhere.

Against this disquieting backdrop, Arun Shourie, in this second of a three-part essay from the forthcoming publication, *Religion in Politics*, published by Roli Books International, advocates a different role for theologians than the mere notation of similarities and differences of faiths. In a fascinating exposition, Shourie argues against the one basic tenet of religious fundamentalism—that every word in each religious text is divinely inspired. He provides innumerable instances of conflicting versions of the same incident among different holy books of the same faith.

his statutes have been created by Brahma Himself, we have Moses bringing the tablets down from the mountain, we have the Bible ascribing everything to God and His Son, we have the Prophet claiming that the Quran which was revealed to him by Allah through the angel Gabriel was a reproduction of the original which is lying in heaven. Divine ordination was the necessary sanction. (It was not always the

sufficient one as is evident from the fact that ever so often a great deal of physical force had to be used to make people adhere to the decrees.)

Now, this sanction could be enforced only by insisting that every word that had come down from Brahma, or God, or Allah was true, eternal, excellent. Hence the claims on behalf of the Bible and the Quran among the *ahli al kitab*. As invariably happens, once the respective churches were founded, what had been

claimed on behalf of the Book—literal inerrancy, eternal infallibility—was soon claimed on behalf of the churches, the *alima*, and the Pope. These claims both for the respective books and the priests survive to this day, and are at the root of intolerance and reaction, as well as of heteronomy among followers.

We must therefore examine the



claims to infallibility that are made on behalf of religion and are believed by the faithful. What did the religions and the texts prophesy and how did things turn out in fact? The world, for instance, was to have ended and the second coming was to have taken place within the lifetime of some of Jesus' companions. That of course did not happen because, as Schopenhauer noted, an embarrassment even to Peter and Paul. Similarly, every statement of fact in the Books—about the cosmos, geography of the earth, history (including the history of the Books themselves), medicine—should be tabulated and set against what we know today. Several things will become clear at once. First, it will be clear that in the light of what we now know, we just cannot maintain any longer that the 'every word' of the books or the traditions is literally true. The assertions about creation in the Bible and the Quran, about conception, illness, medicine in the *hadis* so patently reflect the state of knowledge at that time that even clerical scholars now say that the account of creation in the Bible, for instance, is not to be taken literally, that it has been put that way only for its dramatic effect, that the words reflect not the literal truth but just a manner of speaking.

Second, the internal evidence of the Books themselves shows that 'every word' in them just cannot be true. The Bible gives two accounts of the creation; the accounts differ. It attributes its 'books' to Moses, Isaiah etc; but on its own showing several of the events narrated in each of them took place long after, in some cases hundreds of years after, the supposed author had died. At one place (Mark, 2:26) David enters the house of God and eats the leaves of offering under the high priest Abiathar. At another (1 Samuel, 21:1 etc) this occurs not under Abiathar but his father, Ahimelech. In one place Matthew (27:9) attributes a prophecy to Jeremiah and at another (11:12) to Zachariah. In the New Testament the genealogy of Jesus is given in two places—once in the Gospel according to Matthew, and once in the Gospel according to Luke. Both give the names beginning from David down to Joseph, the husband of Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus. On Matthew's reckoning David is followed seriatim by 25 heirs—whom he lists—before we get to Joseph. On Luke's, by 40. And apart from the first and the last names in the series—i.e. the names David and Joseph—our authors have not one name in common. It isn't that the names of who succeeded who are common and that it is just that in a few places the order is different. Not one name in one list so much as occurs in the other. Moreover, as Paine asked, what is the point of listing the 25 or the 40? Jesus, being the Son of God, and

having been born to a virgin, was not the son of Joseph in any case. One fact after another about that all-important event—the crucifixion of Jesus—is different in the different Gospels.

In Matthew (26:14-16) Judas promises to the priests that he will identify Jesus for them in return for the 30 pieces of silver that they actually give him, in Mark (14:10-11) and Luke (22:3) for the money they promise to give him. In Luke (22:3) Satan enters Judas at this stage itself, i.e. before the Last Supper. In John (14:27) he does so at the Last Supper.

Accounts of the Last Supper differ a great deal. To continue with Judas, for instance, in Mark and Luke Jesus tells his 12 disciples in a general way that one of them will betray him, one who is at the table with him, one who is eating with him and him, who is dipping bread in the same dish with him (Mark, 14:17-21; Luke 22:21). In him (Mark, 14:17-21) Jesus is a bit more specific, Matthew he is a bit more specific, but not entirely so: when like the others Judas asks him, 'Is it I, Master?' Jesus answers, 'You have said so' (Luke 22:25). But in John, Jesus identifies Judas clearly and specifically. When the disciples ask who it is among them who will betray him, Jesus says, 'It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it.' And, John adds, 'So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot' (John, 14:21-26).

In Mark, Luke and John we hear no more about Judas. But in Matthew (27:3-5) Judas repents when he sees the result of his betrayal and

returns the silver pieces. But it is too late. And, repentant, he hangs himself.

The exchanges with Pilate too differ. Matthew (27:11-14), and Mark (15:1-5) state that after answering Pilate's question, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus does not answer any further questions at all. Luke too reports him responding to that question in the same way, but he says nothing about Jesus answering other questions or remaining silent. On the other hand, John (18:33-38), (19:10-11) reports lively exchanges between the two.

In Matthew, Mark and John the 'trial' takes place only in the presence of Pilate. In Luke, however, Pilate, finding that Jesus has done no wrong, sends him to Herod, from whose jurisdiction Jesus hails and who happens to be in Jerusalem. Herod too finds that Jesus has done no wrong and sends him back to Pilate.)

In Matthew (27:32), Mark (15:21) and Luke (23:26) Simon of Cyrene is compelled to carry the cross on which Jesus is to be crucified. In John (19:17) Jesus is made to carry it himself.

Each gives a separate account of the words that were put above Jesus' head, specifying the charge. Mark and Luke do not specify who writes them and puts them there. From Matthew (27:37) it seems the soldiers do so. In John (19:19) Pilate himself writes them out and puts them on the cross.

John tells us nothing about the attitude of the two thieves who are

crucified along with Jesus, one to his left and one to his right. Matthew (27:44), and Mark (15:32) report both of them as reviling him. But in Luke (15:32), one thief reviles Jesus and the other one remarks the futility of doing so.

The accounts differ as much on the last words of Jesus.

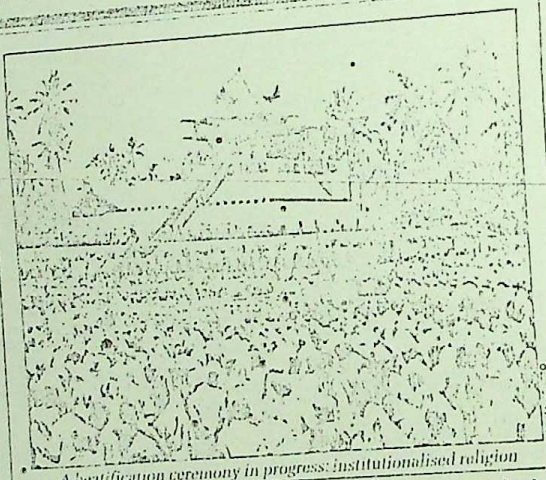
Matthew (27:46-50) and Mark (15:33-34) both report Jesus as crying out in a loud voice, 'My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?' And, after crying out once again, breathing his last. The words do not occur in Luke and John at all.

Instead Luke (23:34) reports Jesus as saying first, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Next (23:39-41), he reports one of the thieves reviling Jesus, the second rebuking the first for doing so and instead entreating Jesus, 'Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power,' and Jesus assuring him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.' It is after all this, that Luke (23:44-54) reports Jesus as crying out in a loud voice. But what Jesus says while doing so is not what Matthew and Mark say he said. Instead, in Luke Jesus cries, 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.' And with this breathes his last.

In John we have nothing at all the above. Instead, upon noticing mother and a loved disciple, he to Mary, 'Woman, behold your son' and to the disciple he says, 'Behold your mother!' After this he says, 'I thirst.' As in the accounts a sponge with vinegar put to his mouth, and, taking it says, 'It is finished,' bows his head and gives up the spirit.

The hour at which Jesus is actually crucified is different in the narratives. The events that take place in the skies and on earth are different. The accounts of the resurrection just as much. They differ again in regard to Jesus appearing before the disciples after his resurrection—in Matthew the encounter him in a mountain in Galilee, in Luke they do so in a house in Jerusalem, in John another setting. While in the Gospel of Matthew, John and Mary would seem to fall out of sight the resurrection till he appears to 11 disciples (on the mountain in Galilee or in the house in Jerusalem according to the Gospel of Luke) travels in disguise with two to a village some seven miles from Jerusalem and them, and only then for sight. He appears not to be first to the two. And so.

Over the last three hundred years even devout scholars have concluded that the authors were concerned in each instance what actually happened and create the overall situation.



A baptism ceremony in progress: institutionalised religion

Once the respective churches were founded, what had been claimed on behalf of the Book—literal inerrancy, eternal infallibility—was soon claimed on behalf of the churches, the ulema and the Pope.



that would reinforce the central message of faith. They now hold that it is not 'the literal inerrancy' that we must look for in, say, the Bible but the integrity of the overall mind-set of faith which the authors create through the dramatic situations they construct.

There is much to be said for this view as there can be no doubt at all about the enormous impact that each of the four Gospels has on the reader, non-Christian and Christian alike. The contradictions or differences in regard to specific details are as nothing when set against this impact. But, while it is entirely correct to focus on the overall impact of the narrative, and to realise that this is what was the concern of the narrators, in urging that we focus on the overall impact rather than on the precise details, on 'the atmosphere' that the words create rather than on the words themselves, we are clearly discarding the position that every single word of the text is the truth, nothing but the truth and the whole truth. By focusing on the overall impact rather than on 'the literal inerrancy' we are saying in effect that the authors of the Gospels are not to be looked upon as chroniclers listing what transpired but as dramatists, each concerned with making the particular event he is portraying most effective, with making the particular speech that is being delivered at that moment most evocative without bothering about whether what he is setting down conforms to or contradicts what other dramatists have written about that scene or speech, or what in fact happened.

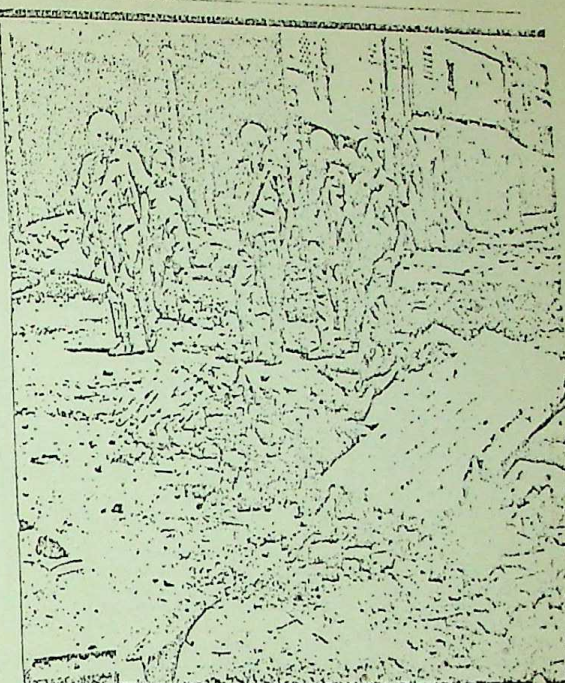
The next fact that stands out, however, forces us to move beyond this realisation too. Often the Books treat of the same events. Now, each is sacred. Each is said to be from God. Every word in each is said to be true, and eternally so. What is one to do then when they differ with each other in their account of the same event? A single example will have to suffice. Jesus is mentioned in 15 suras of the Quran. Ninety-three verses deal directly with him. The announcement of the Virgin and the birth of Jesus is differentiated at one place (*Quran*, 19.17)—an angel comes and informs the Virgin that God has decided to make a sign of her (ie, that He has decided to perform an extraordinary thing, a miracle through her so that people realise His, ie, God's greatness) by having her, a virgin, bear a son who shall be perfect etc. At other places (*Quran*, 21.9, 66.12) the two events are telescoped into one so that God is represented as both telling her and putting the child in her. Mary subsequently gives birth to Jesus near the trunk of a palm tree (*Quran*, 19.22-34). The Quran informs us again and again that Jesus, while a prophet, was *not* the son of God (for instance, 3.51-5; 4.169; 5.19-21; 5.76-9; 9.30;

19.35-6; 43.57-63). In the Gospels Jesus does not reveal the nature of his mission to his companions till after a long period of preparation. In the Quran (3.41, 19.30) he proclaims it from the cradle itself. Most important, it reports that Jesus was not crucified at all, that the one the Jews slew on the cross was just a look-alike (*Quran*, 3.153-9). As Jesus was not killed, there was no occasion for subsequent events like the resurrection etc.

The devout Christian is liable to find the 'reasons' that the Quran gives for concluding, for instance, that Jesus was *not* the son of God, to be just as unconvincing as the devout Muslim is liable to find puerile the 'reasons' that one may extract from the Bible for the proposition that he was the Son of God. The Quran says, for instance, that it is wrong to attribute a son to God as the latter has no consort (6.101; 112.3). But, surely, a Being who can endow a virgin with a son so as to make a sign of her so that men believe in Him, ie, in Allah, a Being who can create the entire cosmos, including time and space, out of nothing, should be able to create a son out of nothing too. Similarly, the Quran says that it is a sin to ascribe a son to God, 'when it becometh not for the God of Mercy to beget a son' (19.91-3). But why is it *seemly* for God to have prophets, apostles, messengers (on whom He lavishes extraordinary care to the point of always rushing to get them out of their personal predicaments), and *unseemly* for Him to have a son? Why is it *seemly* for God to have evil and suffering among His creations and *unseemly* to have a son among them?

Are the 'reasons' of the Quran as much as the Bible not something else altogether? The Bible must affirm that Jesus is the Son of God so as to exalt him to his unique position, a position so unique that a religion can be founded after him. For exactly the same reason the Quran must insist that he was *not* the Son of God, for the same reason it must deny the central event of Christian martyrology, namely, that he was crucified: if it accepts these affirmations it cannot create for Mohammed the unique position it must if it is to found an entire religion on the latter.

The Prophet of course did say that Jesus will come again, but it is unlikely that Christians would adopt his account of the second coming. The Prophet says that Jesus will descend once again ('soon' in one tradition, at 'the last hour' in others), that he will be 'a just judge', and will break crosses, kill swine, abolish the *pizza*, and leave the young she-camels so that collectors of *zakat* will not be employed for them, that 'he will marry, have children, and remain forty-five years, after which he will die and be



The unending saga of communal violence: product of religious bigotry

buried along with me in my grave. Then Jesus son of Mary and I will arise from one grave between Abu Bakr and Umar' (*Mishkat al-Masabih*, Book XXVI, Chapter 6). Furthermore, on the Day of Judgment, we are told, Jesus will be a witness against the Christian. He will testify to the grave sin they have committed by putting him and Mary at par with God.

All this strikes at the very roots of the message conveyed in the New Testament. Both sets of accounts are equally revered, equally authentic. But in view of diametrically opposing assertions such as these they cannot both be literally and simultaneously true. And the examples can be multiplied many times over.

## THE SECULAR APPROACH TO THE BOOK

The book is thus a ladder, not a fence, a scaffolding, not a prison. The believer who merely chants, 'Every word of it is true,' is foregoing the benefits that one may derive from the Book just as much as the ostentatious non-believer who just keeps shouting, 'It is all a fable.' Neither is reliving the experience that the texts enshrine, neither is letting the texts address him. We should approach the texts with an open mind, a receptive one, and, instead of making the Book an object either of superstitious reverence or of exhibitionist 'taking apart', we

should appropriate it, reading it creatively, meditating on it creatively, looking at a passage this way today and that way tomorrow.

The humanist and secular attitude to all texts can only be as follows:

- Every Book is man-made;
- Each of the Books we revere has much that is valuable, but also much that is dated, and much that is just not tenable;
- Each of us has the right—and, in the poisoned air of today, the duty—to study and interpret each Book;
- Our surest guide in doing so is direct experience and not the dictat of some intermediary; in particular, most of us have a greater capacity to understand and interpret the texts than the professional priests and theologians, and an infinitely greater capacity to do so than the politicians who hector us in the name of religion.

Because of the nature of the Hindu tradition, because of the special position that the mystic—to whom books are nothing, and direct perception everything—has had in it, and also because of the work of the great reformers of that tradition—Vivekananda, Dayanand, Anandmole, Gandhi and others—these propositions are well accepted in relation to the Hindu texts. The humanist and secularist must extend them to the other texts too.

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• We go by the entire text, and  
not by the isolated verse;

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- We go by the primary text and not the commentaries;
- We go by the plain, manifest meaning of the text and the passage, and not by the convoluted construction put on it by theologians and priests;
- We go not by the effect that an isolated passage is liable to have on the believer, but on the mind-set, the world-view that is liable to result from the text as a whole;
- Finally, that we go by the entire corpus of texts and not by just this single volume or that.

By proceeding thus, will we, as Aurobindo would say, break out of 'ecclesiastical tyranny'. It is by acquiring this freedom towards the book that we will break the rival millenarian claim of the religions. Once the millenarian claim is undermined, the religion will not be able to demand total, unreasoning obedience. And once it cannot demand that, it will be much less able to set us at each other's throats.

#### THE CHURCH AND THE PRIEST

After comparing what the books say about the universe, about the geography and evolution of the earth, about history in one place with what they say in another, after comparing what one sacred book says about the matter with what another equally sacred one says, after comparing what all of them say

with what we now know about the matter, the programme of secular education should catalogue the positions that have been enunciated, indeed enforced in the name of religion by the religious establishments. A syllabus of Errors to match that of Pope Pius IX should be prepared setting out what was insisted upon and enforced about the solar system from the times of Giordano, Bruno, Copernicus, Galileo, what was insisted upon about the evolution of man a century ago, what is being enforced today, say on the matter of contraception setting out assertions such as the one that it was sacrilegious to use anaesthetics to alleviate the pains of the mother in childbirth—the scripture having decreed, 'In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children' (Genesis, III-16)—while it was permissible to use them while operating on men (as the Lord Himself had put Adam into deep sleep before extracting the rib), setting out notions such as the one that there are witches and it is one's bounden duty to exterminate them—the scripture having enjoined, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live' (Exodus, XXII-18)—and the propositions certified by the Council of Trent that original sin is transmitted through procreation, that ordination leaves an indelible mark on the soul.

The catalogue must also list the considerations on account of which the custodians of religious truth have propagated, and tenaciously held on to such notions. The position of the Vatican on contraception is a case in point. 'It amounts to thwarting God's will,' say successive encyclicals and five successive Popes. Surely that can't be the reason. After all, they have officially sanctioned surgery, including heart transplants. The reason is to be found in the authoritarian nature of the organisation; such an organisation must keep a hand in the most intimate activities of those under its sway, for only by making them heed it in an activity that personal can establish the notion that is the *sine qua non* of its authority—the notion that there is no inviolate sphere of autonomy for the individual. This is the reason why successive Councils and Popes, having altered, amended, even shed so much, hold on to the archaic view on this singular matter. And then there is the 'reason' that they just cannot acknowledge that the Pope and the Church have erred for so long in the face of so much well-intentioned counsel to the contrary. The authority of the Church rests on the proposition that the Pope is infallible. And the reason on account of which he is infallible is that, being the successor to Peter, he is at all times being directly guided by the Holy Spirit. Five Popes having affirmed over half a century that contraception violates 'natural law', 'the will of God', to now acknow-

ledge that the correct position is the opposite would strike at the very basis of the claim to Papal infallibility, and hence at the very basis of the authority of the Church. The minority of the Papal Commission on birth control (the minority whose position the Pope adopted, rejecting the position arrived at by the majority of the Commission he had himself appointed) put the matter squarely:

'What weighs more heavily, however, is that this change (in the Church's position on birth control) would involve a heavy blow to the doctrine of the assistance of the Holy Spirit promised the Church to lead the faithful on the right way toward their salvation... For the Church to have erred so gravely in its grave responsibility of leading souls would be seriously suggesting that the assistance of the Holy Spirit was lacking to her.'

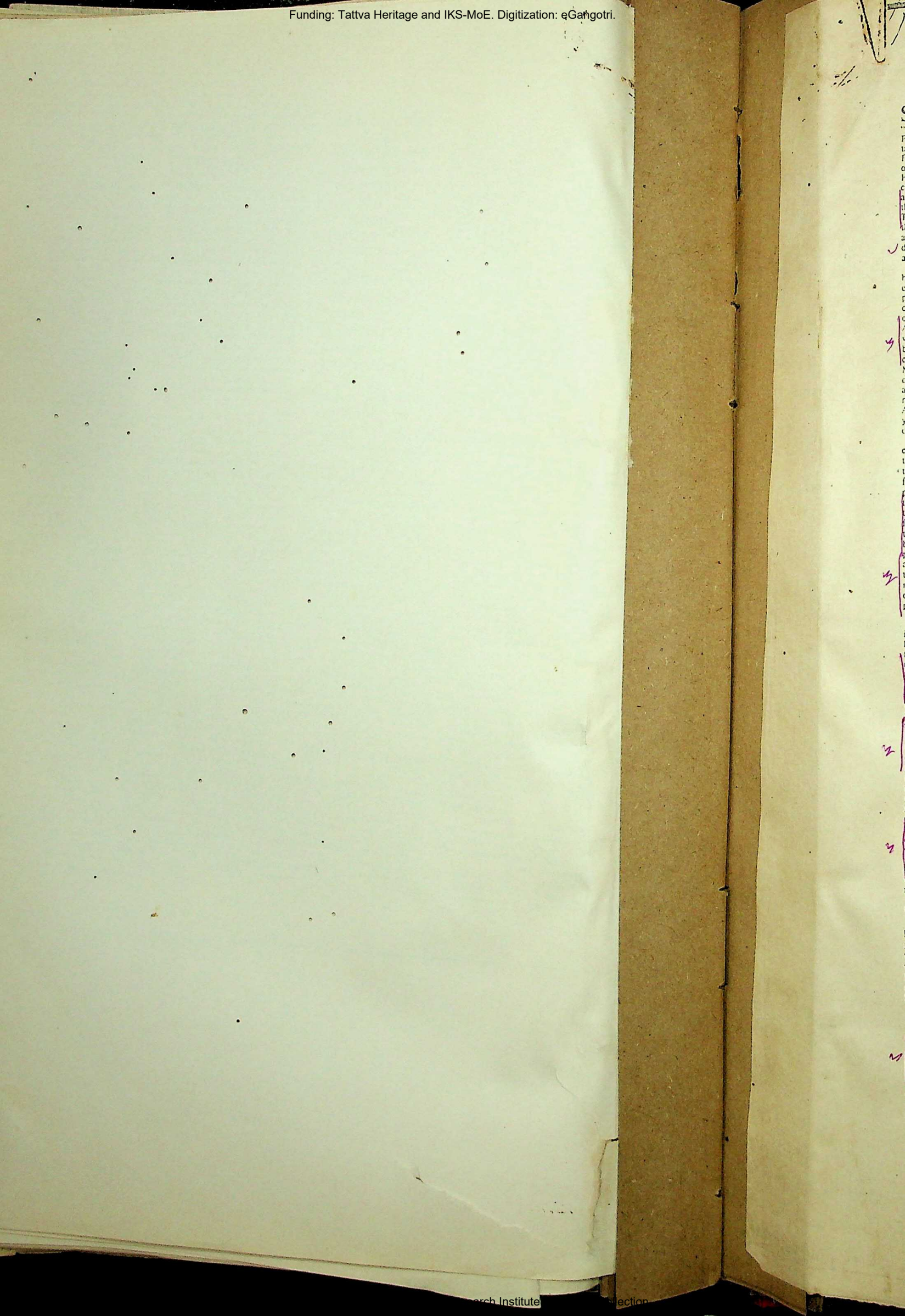
Indeed it would amount to saying that the Holy Spirit had been guiding the enemies of the Pope and his Church, that is Protestants and the like. As has been well put,

'If contraception were declared not intrinsically evil, in honesty it would have to be that the Holy Spirit in 1930 (in reference to the encyclical, *Casti Connubii*), in 1951 (in reference to the address of Pius XII to midwives) and 1958 (in reference to his address to the Society of Haematologists), assisted the Protestant Churches, and that for half a century did not protect Pius XI, Pius XII and a large part of the Catholic hierarchy against a very grave error, and most pernicious to souls; for it would have suggested that they condemned most imprudently, under the pain of eternal punishment, thousands upon thousands of human acts which were now approved. Indeed, it can be neither denied nor ignored that these acts would be approved for the same fundamental reasons which Protestants alleged and which they (popes and bishops) condemned or at least did not approve.'

Saving face may be an exclusively eastern preoccupation, saving authority however seems to be a western concern too!

A Syllabus of Errors of this kind will establish that infallibility which cannot now be claimed for the book can be claimed even less for the Church and the Priest, that the book is just an aid—a ladder to be used up to a stage, and then discarded—and that to benefit from the aid direct experience, direct experimentation is what is necessary, the intermediation of the Church and the Priest is not. It will teach us that each of the techniques, each of the assertions of the books, Churches, Priests, must be examined on its merits. In no case must their veto, their embargo or their certificate be accepted without scrutiny.







# The Hindu-Muslim Problem

## Residue Of An Old Conflict

By GIRILAL JAIN

SOME leftists and secularists have reacted adversely to my article "The Hindu Backlash: Ghost That Fails To Rise". To begin with, I was taken by surprise by this reaction. For I had not advocated a backlash; on the contrary I had argued that the Hindus lacked the necessary coherence to be able to function as a religious community in the sense this term is generally understood. Then I realised that the leftists and the secularists in question were angry with me precisely because I did not treat the Hindus just as another community.

I do not wish to try and apportion blame for communal violence which erupts from time to time in different places. I do not believe it is desirable or even possible to do so on an objective basis. A riot in Ahmedabad is different from one in western U.P. and the causes need to be separately investigated in each case. Apart from the old Hindu-Muslim antagonism, a number of other factors go into the creation of a situation which lends itself to repeated incidents of violence as in Ahmedabad and Baroda in recent years, the decline of the textile industry, for instance.

It follows that the earlier article could not be inspired by the desire to exonerate the Hindus and blame the others, especially the Muslims, for communal violence. The purpose was quite different. It was to show that most of the commentators had got stuck with a wrong formulation and to try and persuade them to move away from it. I believe that once the truth of the proposition that the Hindus are not and cannot become a community in the sense the minorities are communities begins to be recognised, our approach to the communal problem can acquire greater clarity.

On the basis of the kind of reasoning I advanced in that article a leading commentator has gone so far as to argue that India consists of many nations, that the nations are rooted in the major languages of India (incidentally, with the exception of Urdu, all of them are creations of the Hindus) and that instead of trying to become a nation-state (in the European sense), the Indian state should be a "state of many nations". This represents the other extreme which is as invalid. If the Hindus are not a religious community in the normal sense of the term, they are also not divided into many nations on the basis of language. If they were, they could not have produced one freedom movement and stayed together as one country under one central state with a constitution which is as much unitary as it is federal. The Hindus are a complex people and they cannot be described in such simplistic terms.

### Computer Age

India can truly be said to be launched on a greater venture precisely because the Hindus are what they are. No one can predict what shape this venture will take. But the venture is a fact. The venture will also reshape the Hindus. Science and technology are great agents of change. We cannot live in the bullock-cart age. But that is not what is under discussion. The reference is to the social and political arrangements that will emerge as a result of the turbulence we are going through.

As suggested earlier, this turbulence in the country is also largely responsible for what we call upsurge of communalism in the country. We are giving an old name to a new phenomenon, though the old prejudices and memories are

also at work.

To be candid, when we talk of communalism, we have by and large in mind. But in a fundamental sense this issue has been resolved. We are ever troublesome, is nothing more than a residue of what was truly a gigantic conflict before 1947. So if I were asked for my response to the efforts some Hindu organisations are making to cope with the supposed threat from the Muslims, I would say that these are misplaced. And I would say this not just as a secularist but also as a self-conscious Hindu who is deeply interested in the survival and growth of the Hindu civilization.

The causes of the Hindu-Muslim conflict are complex and cannot be discussed in a newspaper article. In any case, the question has been thoroughly discussed that it is not possible for me to add anything to it. I would only underscore one point. Which is that the conflict assumed menacing proportions because the British established and maintained a parity between the two. Incidentally that was partly why they introduced separate electorates. The nationalist movement accepted the separate electorates because it had no choice and it also accepted a parity between the two in cultural-civilizational terms. That is what the talk of India's composite culture implied.

We do not know what course India's development would have taken if independence had not been accompanied by partition. But while that is now a matter of only academic interest, it cannot be seriously denied that partition ended the parity between the Hindus and the Muslims in both political and in cultural-civilizational terms. After August 15, 1947, there could be no doubt that India of the future will be shaped, for good or ill, essentially by the Hindus. And it has been.

### Urban Dominance

It is immaterial for the purpose of this discussion whether one regards the Hindu civilization or the incoming Arab-Muslim civilization as superior. As I see things, civilizations are different; they are not superior or inferior; and the two under discussion here were without doubt very different. There can also be no doubt that the Arab-Muslim civilization prevailed during the Muslim rule and that it reshaped the personality of the urban Hindu elite. But while its dominance declined with the decline of the Moghul empire in the 18th century, the Hindu civilization could not reassert itself; apparently it did not possess the necessary vigour just as the Hindus did not possess the necessary resources to be able to take over power from the Moghuls in decline.

The contact with the British produced among the Hindus a reform movement which served as the basis of Indian nationalism. They were also quick to take advantage of Western education; this gave them entry into the administration and the professions in large numbers. These two developments together with the fact of their significant majority could have placed the Hindus in a dominant position under the Raj if, on the one hand, the Muslims too had not taken to Western education and, on the other, the British had not decided to end the discrimination against them. And indeed to favour them. This policy produced a stalemate. While this stalemate led to partition, the partition ended the stalemate. The Hindus came into their own in what remained of India on August 15,

1947. This was a turning point for them, perhaps the most important in all their history.

There is a great deal of confusion regarding the nature of developments in this regard in post-independence India. Much of this confusion is the result of our continued use of the pre-independence vocabulary which in turn is the result of our refusal to take due note of so dramatic a development as the country's partition on the basis of religion and the consequent decline in the Muslim population in India. This changed the power realities and thus made the old formulations and stances at least partly invalid. I believe that the abolition of separate electorates for the minorities was a reflection of the new reality, so is the rise of Hindi in north India.

### Identity Question

The political leadership in independent India has had the sagacity to ensure that the minorities especially the Muslims who constitute 11-12 per cent of the total population, enjoy all the rights of citizenship so that they do not feel driven into a corner, leaving them no choice but to fight back for their survival. The widespread acceptance of an Indian variant of the concept of secularism has facilitated this task of the ruling party and leadership. But this has not served the cause of the Hindus. On the contrary, the emphasis on secularism, however defined, has helped the Hindus in two ways. It has prevented the growth of bitterness among the Muslims, and it has promoted the cause of modernisation among the Hindus. This approach has had one apparent weakness; it has failed to attend to the question of Indian identity. But that is an expression of lack of coherence among the Hindus; the minorities cannot be blamed for it.

I for one neither bemoan this lack of coherence nor welcome it. For it poses a problem in respect of national identity. It facilitates our march into modernity. If the Hindu identity was well defined, it could have made the pull of the past irresistible. And in the very act of moving into the modern world, the Hindus may acquire a unity they have never possessed before. Moreover, power in an era grows out of the drive of a computer.

It is widely believed that it would have been wonderful if a large section of the Muslims were not to resist joining the march into modernity. This belief is based on the assumption that such development among the Muslims would have facilitated the growth of secular nationalism. The assumption is not self-proven. In any event, it is neither possible nor desirable to try and force the pace of change among them. Also their social conservatism cannot be said to create any special problems for the Hindus and does not, therefore, call for special remedial measures on the part of the latter.

In India we have mustered the art of evasion. We discuss both domestic and international issues as if power in its various manifestations does not decisively shape events. The result cannot but be confusion on an enormous scale. This is what has happened on the Hindu-Muslim question. It is truly extraordinary that the Hindus should feel threatened in independence India which they cannot but dominate. Some Muslims may have behaved provocatively on occasions. This has apparently set in motion a chain of events which has strengthened the prejudice against them among the Hindus. But this cannot negate the whole range of developments since 1947.









# Secularism : Quintessence

By S. B.

From times immemorial, human beings have followed one religion or other, instituted and preached by one or more prophets who appeared at different times in different regions of the world. These prophets preached the objective of human life as realising God, whom they almost uniformly described as omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, though each of them had different ideas about the name, form, abode and description of God. Each of them preached certain rites, rituals, customs, procedures and practices suited to the nature, climate and circumstances of their followers for realising God.

But in course of time, the followers of the most of the prophets lost sight of the main objective of realising God and gave importance to rites, rituals, customs, which they termed as 'religion'. The result was that the differences in the rites, rituals and customs created different religions and followers of each religion believed his religion to be superior to all the rest and tried to impose and propagate his religion to others whom they regarded as non-believers, pagans or kafirs. The Christians and Muslims forget that their God was the same unique power and fought for 200 years in middle ages around Jerusalem and called these crusades. Certain barbaric kings moved from Middle East to various parts of Asia and Africa to spread their religion to the pagans living there. History of middle ages in India is also replete with religious atrocities, persecutions, destruction of places of worship and religious conversions by force, intimidation or material benefits.

But what was the religion prevalent in ancient India of 3 or 4 millenniums back? Who was the prophet that propounded it? Did

Rama and Krishna or Mahatma Veda Vyasa establish it? No. By their life, behaviour and thoughts they emphasised good behaviour without any rites and rituals and the ancient sages had taught that God is one and unique pervading the whole universe including the human race which is one of His most advanced forms of creation and yet life is nameless and formless and non-perceivable by human intellect. Hence each person should have love and affection for all beings, human, animals and birds. This they called eternal or universal Dharma (meaning thereby duty, quality as also spirituality) or Manava Dharma which is perfectly scientific as it applies to all human beings and does not distinguish between man and man or various groups of people and is not limited by time and space and is a great force in promoting co-ordination, conciliation and cohesion amongst all human beings on the Earth.

But even in India the true Manava Dharma degenerated into various sects, panths, gods, saints, rites, rituals and came to be called Hinduism. This process of degeneration was thwarted for a time by the appearance of Mahavir Swami and Gautam Buddha in 500 B.C. and by great saints like Guru Nanak Dev, Kabir, Vallabhacharya, Ramanuj, Chaitanya and some sufi saints in the middle ages, since none of them wanted to have a separate religion or panth but exquisite devotion to unique God; but it was our misfortune that in a few decades, the main teachings of Manav Dharma and unique God were forgotten and each of them was regarded by his followers as originator of a new religion or sect or panth!

But it is the crux of the problem which at present most of us fail to understand and accept. How can Allah be the same as Durga or Shiva or Narayana? But if we accept what our ancient traditions and culture gave us, religious

pursuits instead of being a cause of arson, looting, burning, killing and harassing other atrocities may be a great force, not only for national integrity but for world peace also. Here, we try to understand the uniqueness of God, allegorically of course, with our limited intellect.

Let us imagine what chaos will it be, if there were as many Gods as there are religions, sects or panths. Each God will protect His own devotees and at their prayers would harass devotees of other Gods! Each God will have limited power, since it will have to be shared with other Gods. If so, how could any prophets have called God omnipotent? Were these prophet wrong in calling God omnipotent, Aslam, Sami, Basir or Sarva Vya? Is Acharya Shankara's 'Ekam Eva Advituyam' different from 'La Allah Ill Allah' of Prophet Mohammed except for the difference in language and script? Thus it does not stand to reason that each religion has a separate God sitting in a place like heaven or jannat or siddhasthila only. Truth is that God is in all such places as also everywhere, pervading his entire creation and this is why all prophets have called Him omnipresent and omniscient.

Just as there cannot be Russian Physical Laws and American Physical Laws or Chinese, Russian or Indian Sun, Gold also cannot be Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jain or Sikh. He is One and Unique in the universe and yet the creator, pervisor, protector and destructor of all.

It is not, then, by trial and error or by accident or by following western political thoughts that the architects of our constitution made Free India a Secular State. All of them were under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi whose life and works proved him to be modern embodiment of ancient Indian culture and thought. The Oxford Dictionary means by secularism a "doctrine that the basis of morality should

be non-religious", while secularism means 'to make worldly' and secular means 'opposed to religious'. If we stick to these meanings, our state cannot allow religious teachings in schools and cannot follow any religion or interfere in any religious pursuits of the citizens. The Western states have followed secularism, as they interpreted religion to be a set of rites, rituals, customs and practices. Our Indian culture distinguishes Truth and God from customs and rituals. Our culture means by religion, human behaviour exalted enough to realise God. Hence for interpreting the concept of secularism, we should go deeper into the meaning of the word—'The basis of morality should be non-religious' and 'lasting for ages'. Indian culture emphasising Eternal religion and love and affection for the whole mankind and devoid of particular customs and rituals, i.e. so-called religion, is nothing but human morality and universal brotherhood which Mahatma Gandhi so often preached. Thus to avoid confusion about the western concept of religion and secularism, we use the word secularism to mean 'non-religious morality that is everlasting and applicable to the whole world' and this moral behavior is common to all religions of the world or can be said to be quintessence of all the religions. Thus defined, secularism is the scientific principle.

Our country at present faces a challenge and an opportunity to make our secular democracy strong and integrated, so as to serve as a beacon-light for guiding the entire world towards peace and tranquility and save our globe from nuclear holocaust.

A section of our Sikh brethren, instigated by some foreign powers and by some communal NRIs, have developed the idea of Khalistan. But this section little thinks how catastrophic this idea is, not only for the integrity of our country, but also for world peace.







# MAGAZINE



## Relevance of Indian culture

Mehta

and even for the welfare and security of Sikh people themselves.

Historically, culturally, and politically Sikh and Hindu communities have never found anything antagonistic in their respective religions. Guru Nanak and the ten subsequent gurus have been the sons of Indian soil and have imbued Indian culture and preached ancient Indian thoughts. In their defence against atrocities and religious persecutions by later Moghul kings, both Hindus and Sikhs have stood together. Now in secular India, there is no danger of their religion and customs being

burned in any way and their rights and interests are well protected under provisions of Minority Rights and Regulations. In the modern era of tremendous development of transport and communication systems and super-sonic missiles, small states cannot remain viable and are likely to fall prey to some power or the other. Besides, in getting a small area of Khalistan, the Sikhs will lose the vast and variegated area of the whole country which has been their motherland for thousands of years.

The non-viability of small states is aptly described by M.J. Akbar in writing that the sweet dream of Khalistan may turn into a nightmare and mirage soon, if inputs for Punjab's growth and the demand for its products are stopped by India encircling its three sides and trade and sea outlets are at the mercy of Pakistan (vide: Sunday magazine dated 6th April 1985).

The ill-will between the Sikhs and the Hindus in the north is merely a tip of the iceberg of the insuperable tendencies, inefficiency, corruption and other anti-national activities that loom large in various parts of our country and this should raise the eye-brows of all patriotic and educated citizens of our country, to stop the rot at the earliest. We are now on the brink of virtual bankruptcy of our moral standards. This brings us to

analyse what relation can be there between religion, secularity and economic development.

First of all, what is economic development? Dr. Michael P. Todaro defines economic development as "multi-dimensional process involving the re-organisation and re-orientation of the entire economic and social systems... Economic development during 1970's was redefined in terms of the reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment within the context of a growing economy." (Economic Development in the Third World, pp. 56 and 68).

Thus, western multi-dimensional approach leads us only upto these factors, and all through our seven plans, we have forgotten one important dimension of economic development and it is the building up of national character, strong integrity, staunch patriotic fervour and exquisite moral standard, especially amongst the youths, as also in the rest of our countrymen. It seems that our secular democracy has made us consider religion, morality and cultural education as new untouchables! And in doing so, we have also forgotten to invoke our rich and precious heritage of Indian culture and thought.

It is the aim of this paper to remind our countrymen of the true meaning of secularity in the context of Indian culture, since without integrity, high moral standard and character, no plan or project can be implemented without substantial leakages from plan funds and consequent inefficiency, high costs and low profits or losses in enterprises and intolerable squandering and misdirection of scarce resources, which we can ill-afford.

This is why non-religious morality (secularity) requires to be inculcated in the minds of all of our citizens and in this the author feels stimulated by the views of the great economist Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao, who avers "to give a major place to... 'Positive secularism and

composite Indian culture", as also by the idea of 'civil religion' described by the Chairman of the Minorities Commission though he follows Islam. By these concepts, these experts mean "Pride in their individual religion, esteem for each other's religion and cognition of the universal values that are contained in all the religions". There is no reason why the Indian Muslims should not be proud of their pre-Islamic Indian cultural heritage, even as the Hindus are proud of the Taj Mahal, Red Fort, etc. (vide: Indian Economic Crisis 1984, pp. 61 and 67).

Thus, non-religious morality and respect for all the best books, architecture and culture that flourished 5000 years ago in India, should be extensively brought home to all these citizens of India, who now revel in aping western styles, misculture of terrorism, horror comics, narcotics drug-addiction, loose dressings and all sorts of vices. Where in the world will anyone find the exquisite thoughts, cultural traditions that were found in India in her long history of 5-6 millenniums? Why should every Indian not be proud of it and reestablish it in the present period also?

The above analysis leads us to suggest that for efficient planning, its effective implementation and national character building, what is required is nothing short of a cultural renaissance in India. Surely, this cannot be brought about by government or its agencies. The terms like 'civil religion' or 'positive secularism' or 'non-religious morality' or secularity mean raising the human beings from sub-stratum of animal life to the divine life. A recent Mahatma Yogeshwari who realised God after exquisite penance for more than two decades in the Himalayas, gives four stages in the evolution of human race, viz., khar, nara, narottam and Narayana.

All prophets have aimed at raising the people from animal as like khar-life to Narayana or divine

life, but their followers have soon lapsed into sub-human life including our people. Now for Renaissance of all religions in India, we require a concerted effort by all religious leaders, and educated, patriotic saints, teachers, professors and preachers. When a person is full of vices, follows his religion only in rites and rituals and is perched clinging to his caste, community, region, language and hates those belonging to other religion, region, community, etc. and often destroys their life and property and revels in stoning, looting, burning shops, houses and other emotional properties, he is worse than an animal. He is in 'khar' stage of human race. He takes away from and often destroys much more national property and contributes little, if any, to it.

When a person, following his own religion correctly, respects all other religions, does not harm or harass anybody, he rises to the 'nara' stage of human race. He takes from the nation only as much as he contributes by his labour and intellect. When a person follows his religion and understands and respects truths of other religions and tries to help others by means at his disposal, sometimes sacrificing his own self interest and his contribution to society is much more than what he earns as remuneration, he is in the 'narottam' stage, or his is an exalted human life.

When a person does not find any distinction between himself and rest of the whole of human race, has his ego sense completely destroyed, is beyond the sense of mine-thine, pleasure-pain, affection-disaffection, respect-insult, likes-dislikes, he does not think of harming any person in the world, not even beasts and birds, trees, flora, fauna, he is beyond all dualities and his individual soul is universalised or secularised, he attains the 'Narayana' stage or divine stage of human race. He is then in unison with God, one with

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Finally, Frances Westley, who finds in Durkheim's work a portrayal of future religious individualism that has much in common with Troeltsch's "mysticism" presents this view in "The Cult of Man: Durkheim's Predictions and New Religious Movements," *Sociological Analysis*, 39, (1978): 135-145. The call for conceptual rethinking in the study of new religious movements is made in James Beckford's *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to the New Religious Movements* (London, 1985).

MICHAEL HILL

**SECULARIZATION.** The term *secularization* came into use in European languages at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, where it was used to describe the transfer of territories previously under ecclesiastical control to the dominion of lay political authorities. The term *secularis* was already in use, and the distinction between sacred and secular, roughly equivalent to the differentiation of Christian conceptions of the supernatural from all that was mundane or profane, was widely invoked to assert the superiority of the sacred. Furthermore, the church had long distinguished between those priests called "religious" and those designated as secular priests, that is, between those clergy who functioned within a religious order and those who served the wider society. Later, the term *secularization* was applied in a different, though related, sense, to the dispensation of priests from their vows. The term was applied in even more diverse ways once the concept acquired a more general, sociological connotation in the twentieth century. Sociologists have used this word to indicate a variety of processes in which control of social space, time, facilities, resources, and personnel was lost by religious authorities, and in which empirical procedures and worldly goals and purposes displaced ritual and symbolic patterns of action directed toward otherworldly, or supernatural, ends.

The term was later applied to denote a pattern of social development that earlier sociologists, including Auguste Comte (1798-1857), had already recognized before the term *secularization* was in general sociological use. In the process thus described, the various social institutions become gradually distinct from one another and increasingly free of the matrix of religious assumptions that had earlier informed, and at times had inspired and dominated, their operation. Prior to this change, social action over a very wide field of human activity and organization (including work, decision-making, social and interpersonal relationships, juridical procedures, socialization, play, healing, and life-cycle transitions) is regulated in accordance with supernaturalist preconceptions. The process of structural dif-

ferentiation in which social institutions (the economy, the polity, morality, justice, education, recreation, health maintenance, and familial organization) become recognized as distinctive concerns operating with considerable autonomy is also a process in which conceptions of the supernatural lose their sovereignty over human affairs, a pattern broadly identified as secularization. Conceptions of the supernatural are gradually displaced from all social institutions except those specifically devoted to cultivating knowledge about, and maintaining relationships with, the posited supernatural order. While these agencies still seek to influence other areas of social life, they become recognized as separate and increasingly circumscribed religious institutions.

**Definitions.** This brief discourse already indicates the changing nature of the concept of secularization and the difficulty of providing a fully encompassing definition for it. The concept is distinguishable from secularism, with which it is sometimes confused. Secularization relates essentially to a process of decline in religious activities, beliefs, ways of thinking, and institutions that occurs primarily in association with, or as an unconscious or unintended consequence of, other processes of social structural change. Secularism is an ideology; its proponents consciously denounce all forms of supernaturalism and the agencies devoted to it, advocating non-religious or antireligious principles as the basis for personal morality and social organization. Secularism may contribute in some degree to processes of secularization, but the evidence, even from officially secularist societies such as the Soviet Union, suggests that it does so only very gradually and much less fundamentally than do broad processes of social structural change such as industrialization and urbanization.

Definitions of secularization are intimately bound to definitions of religion. As long as religion is defined substantively, as beliefs, orientations, attitudes, activities, institutions, and structures pertaining to the supernatural (the definition assumed in this article), it is possible to assess the extent to which religion declines or loses significance for the operation of society. Some sociologists, however, have defined religion in functional terms, that is, as any set of beliefs, ideas, and activities that fulfills certain social functions. (The use of functionalist analysis, which is a standard sociological method, does not, of course, imply commitment to functional definitions; indeed, the combination may produce circular arguments.) Where religion is defined functionally, a wide variety of ideologies and activities that have no reference to the supernatural, to morality, faith, destiny, ultimate meaning, or final purposes, may



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## 3 SECULARIZATION

sometimes be held (by definition) to be religion. Insofar as certain functions are regarded as indispensable for the continuance of society or for its cohesion, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, once functionalist definitions are used, to speak of secularization, since religion is identified by definition with whatever supplies certain indispensable functions. The very discussion of secularization and of the social processes that lead to the decline of supernaturally orientated activities and beliefs implies that a substantive definition of religion is being employed. When reference is made not to religion but to specific religions or religious systems, the definitional problem (itself partly an artifact of the sociological penchant for abstract universalistic concepts) disappears.

The concept of secularization lacks a standard definition. It is a term that refers to a wide range of phenomena that occupy a wide social range. What those phenomena have in common is a pattern of diminishing recourse to supernaturalist explanations, diminishing resources employed for supernatural ends, and diminishing support of agencies or activities that promote relationships with, or dependence on, supernatural forces. Other, somewhat narrower terms that allude to some of the same developments include *desacralization*, *laicization*, *dechristianization*. *Desacralization* refers specifically to the loss of the sense of the sacred as it pertains particularly to places, properties, and activities; it has less relevance to religious organization and is less applicable to thought processes. This essentially negative term tends to specify the character of what replaces the diminished sense of the sacred once sacralty disappears. As a concept, it allows less gradation than does secularization. *Laicization* in French is sometimes used as synonymous with *sécularisation*, but the English term *secularization* has a narrower connotation: it refers specifically to the abrogation of priestly offices and functions or to the transfer of certain functions, such as judicial roles, teaching, and social work, to specialists for whom theological qualifications are no longer deemed necessary or appropriate. *Laicization* refers also to the disavowal of the explicitly sacerdotal claims of religious professionals. *Dechristianization* is clearly more concerned with the decline of only one religious tradition, particularly in its control of institutional activities. As a term it lacks the ethical neutrality of the term *secularization*.

Briefly defined, secularization is the process in which religious consciousness, activities, and institutions lose social significance. It indicates that religion becomes marginal to the operation of the social system, and that the essential functions for the operation of society be-

come rationalized, passing out of the control of agencies devoted to the supernatural.

**Indices of Secularization.** Analysis of social structure will reveal in broad terms to what extent the order and operation of society depend on conceptions of the supernatural and activities related to it; that is, the extent to which a society is secularized. Short of a complete analysis of the social system, various social facts may serve as indications of secularization, although these vary in specificity and relevance from one social and cultural context to another. Broadly, it may be said that the increasing specialization of function and role entailed in structural differentiation has invariably reduced the influence of religion over other social institutions. Religion in the West has generally become merely a department of the social order rather than the pervasive, or even determinant, influence it once was.

We may say that religious consciousness declines as empirical and matter-of-fact attitudes develop. Depictions of the supernatural become increasingly abstract, and its operation is regarded as remote, while individual convictions concerning obligation, dependence, and remorse appear to be less compelling. Recourse to the supernatural declines, whether as a means for the cognitive understanding of the world or for personal emotional support. There is less allusion to God's will as the guide for attitudes, comportment, and action, and resort to prayers or curses is less frequent. Religious symbols lose their vibrancy and meaning, and charms, rosaries, and crosses become largely decorative items, while magic—for example, in the form of popular astrology—becomes a titillating amusement. Everyday life is negotiated by pragmatic attitudes and cause-and-effect thinking.

As religious action (action directed toward the supernatural) is regarded as less effective in relation to worldly experience, so it diminishes in scope and scale. Religious observances cease to be obligatory to members of society and become entirely voluntary; this indicates, at the least, a diminished regard for such practices by state authorities. While the abandonment of obligatory religious practice may eliminate one set of extraneous motivations for religious action, it does not eradicate others; for example, traditional habits of life, conformity with custom, or the search for social prestige may continue as possible extrareligious inducements for participation in religious rituals and collective performances. The same social act, for instance church going, baptism, or religious marriage or burial, may be prompted by different motives and carry widely different meanings in different cultural contexts. However, despite these considerations, church attendance,







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erships, *rites de passage*, grace at meals,  
secul. pilgrimages, votive offerings, fasting,  
sciol. religious festivals, and church weddings all  
stitt. evidence and in the depth of their sacrality.  
as. significant in modern society, religion must be  
eff. organized, a potential resource for all collec-  
public concerns, influencing the social system  
erate in conformity with religious principles and  
h due regard to the supernatural. In the early evo-  
on of modern societies, religious institutions occu-  
d just such a position, but that influence has waned  
rywhere throughout the Christian West. This loss of  
al significance is manifested most explicitly in the  
inishi. proportion of social resources (taken, for  
ance, as a proportion of the gross national product)  
ted to religion and to the maintenance of the per-  
of and property that serve supernaturalist goals.  
or, energy, skill, wealth, and time are increasingly  
loyed for other than supernatural ends. Relative  
population, the number of churches declines, as  
s the number of religious functionaries. The mon-  
y remuneration and social status of clergy dimin-  
relative to those of other professions. Ancillary  
cies (schools, colleges, hospitals, social welfare fa-  
cies) pass from religious to lay, secular, and state  
rol.  
ie application of the concept of secularization to so-  
at large has an analogue in the process of change  
ring within religious institutions *per se*. Not only  
e wider society less influenced by religion, but reli-  
s institutions and behavior are themselves increas-  
influenced by values and standards that prevail in  
ecular society. As society increasingly orders its af-  
in accordance with technical and scientific crite-  
religious institutions themselves are affected. The  
for. alist and sacerdotal orientations of religion  
teenness congruous with the assumptions of every-  
life, and the tendency in religious performance is  
he distance between sacred and secular to diminish.  
special language of liturgy is changed to accom-  
te secular understanding, organization is increas-  
rationalized, economies of scale are sought  
gh ecumenism, and activities necessarily adjust in  
tion, scheduling, style, and tenor to accommodate  
nal secular constraints and preferences. Church  
rs become less certain about the nature of the su-  
atural, less committed to dogma or the formal  
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ingly devote themselves to good works, general  
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nal commentary on political issues. This pattern of

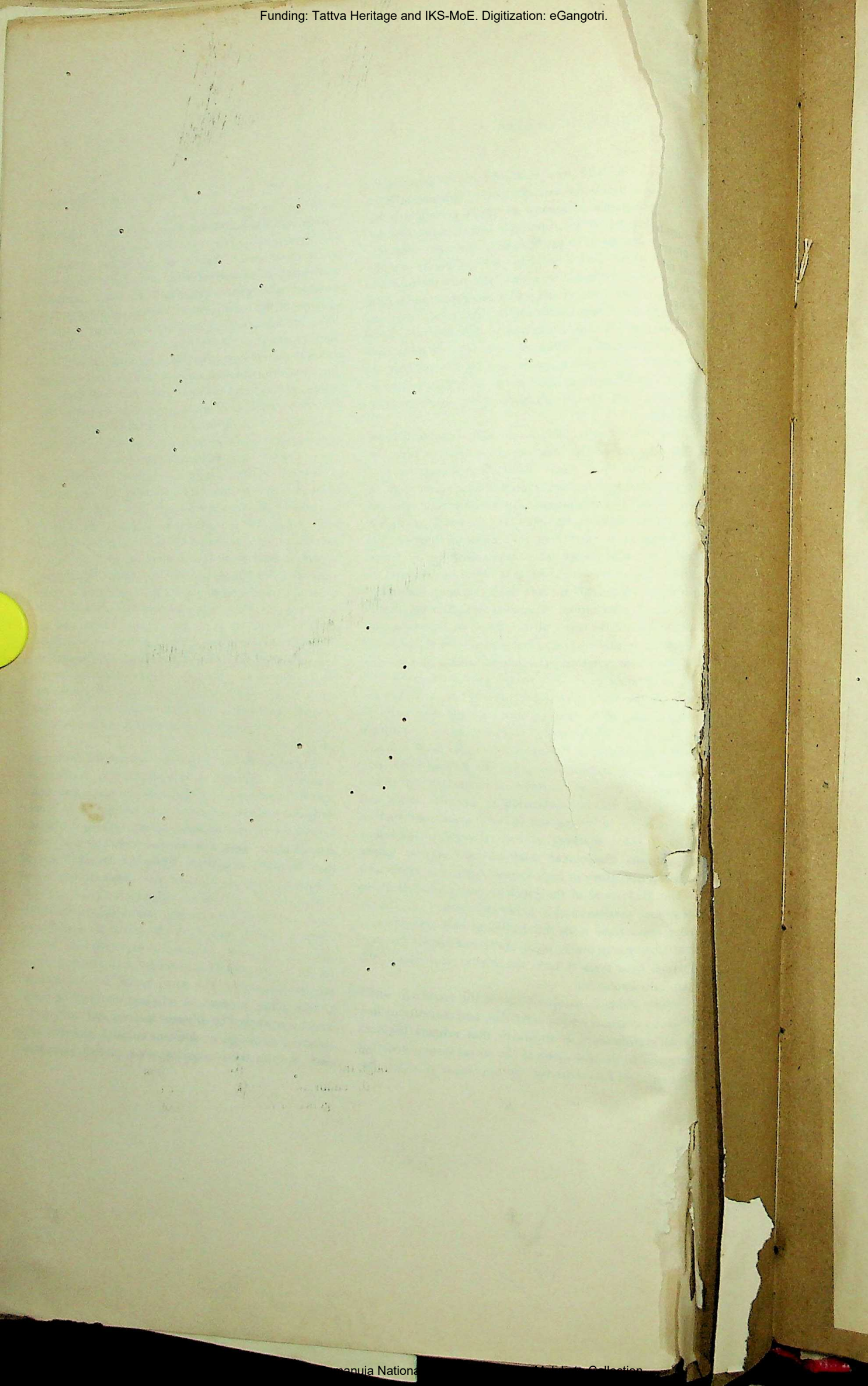
change has been designated as the internal seculariza-  
tion of the churches.

**Secularization as a Historical Process.** Secularization has occurred throughout history, unevenly but in a broadly discernible pattern. In preliterate societies, apprehensions that may be considered supernaturalist were both ubiquitous and inextricably intermingled with empirical knowledge and rational techniques. Explanation invoked superempirical entities, social goals were confused with symbolic acts, and magical means were intermixed with pragmatic procedures. Steadily, the process, which Max Weber designated *die Entzauberung der Welt* ("the disenchantment of the world"), drained natural phenomena of their magico-religious meaning; as men acquired more matter-of-fact, positivistic orientations.

In this analysis, magic may be subsumed with religion under the general rubric of supernaturalism; indeed, the establishment of a distinction between them may in itself be regarded as one aspect of the process of secularization. The development of monotheistic religions involved the rationalization and systematization of conceptions of the supernatural. This process, very evident in the history of Judaism, steadily extinguished the preexisting plethora of random, local magical ideas and local deities; it introduced a more universalistic spirit, made religious apprehensions ethical, and gradually established a coherent conception of an increasingly transcendent and universal deity. The monotheistic religions were themselves agencies of rationalization, and hence, insofar as they reduced the belief in supernaturalism, they were agencies of secularization. Magical beliefs and practices were not immediately eradicated; they sometimes persisted as subterranean currents reappearing periodically. Judaism and Protestantism were generally more effective secularizing agencies than Roman Catholicism, for although all three formally exoriated magic and folk belief, and sought to disseminate orderly, internally consistent teachings and practices, the Roman Catholic Church sometimes countenanced, absorbed, or accommodated pagan elements.

It is sometimes objected that to regard secularization as a cumulative, long-term historical trend necessarily implies the existence at some unspecified time of an unparalleled age of religious faith. Against this implication, it is argued that Christian history reveals the recurrent complaints of clerical authorities about unbelief, laxness in religious observances, and a variety of contingent derelictions. The historical evidence cannot be denied, but religiosity should not be equated with Christianity. Paganism and heresy were







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dicted in the complaints about laxity, but these are manifestations not of the secularity of society but rather of its religiosity. Further, church religion and attendance are only two among many indicators of relative secularity; they intimate nothing either of religious consciousness or of the significance of religion (and its institutions) for the operation of the social system. As long as supernaturalist conceptions (of whatever sort) were effective in everyday life, or as long as religious institutions were sustained by the secular authorities and fulfilled functions as agencies of legitimation, official ideology, and social control, society had not yet experienced any radical modern process of secularization.

In recent Western history, dissociation of religious and political institutions, seen most conspicuously in the separation of church and state (now generally effective despite vestigial links that persist, for example, in England, Scotland, and the Scandinavian countries), implies the secularization of society. At times, ethnic and regional minorities have reinforced their distinctive identity and their political dissent by reasserting religious differences (as in Northern Ireland throughout this century, as in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s, or, much less dramatically, as in the Netherlands). In this same manner, societies in which religion has been associated with national independence have found religion to be a conveniently available means of rallying opposition to politically oppressive regimes (as in Communist Poland). Religion may, then, become a form of surrogate politics, but the continuing vigor of religion in such circumstances is artificially sustained by the prevailing political, ethnic, or regional situation. Where no such conditions prevail, the general course of secularization results in the increasing separation of religion from other institutions, most rapidly and markedly from those on which societal arrangements depend (law, politics, economics, and, eventually, education) and more slowly from those rooted in local community life (marriage, the family, and personal morality).

Against the dominant trend, there are occasional revivals of religion. What such movements achieve has not always been contrary to secular tendencies. Reform movements that seek to purge religion of cultural, traditional, or superstitious accretations may be almost explicitly secularizing in their impact. Even religious revivals that seek a return to what are taken to be pristine ideas and single-minded dedication may have the incidental consequences of eliminating elements of folk religiosity, of widening the gap between religion and other social institutions, of more narrowly specifying religion's social role, and of encouraging privatization by emphasizing personal piety. Reform movements such as Renaissance Humanism, Lutheranism, Calvin-

ism, Deism, and Unitarianism were all secularizing forces within Christianity, purging faith and practice of immanentist conceptions of deity, progressively applying the canons of reason to doctrine, and reducing mystical, miraculous, sacramental, and sacerdotal claims. Revivalism, recurrent in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Christendom (in Methodism, Holiness movements, and Pentecostalism, for example), ostensibly sought to enhance individual emotional commitment and certainly not to put religion to the test of rationality. Yet, expressive religiosity also came to demand discipline and order. When such movements, unencumbered by traditional liturgy and ritual, sought to socialize and organize their followings, they tended to do so by systematic rational procedures, sometimes adapting these from the secular society. Worship assumed forms closer to everyday styles, and the emphasis on subjective awareness, rather than on the supposed objective power of external ritual forms, led to a systematic demand for sustained and calculable performances from individual members. Arcane elements were replaced by goal-oriented methods of propaganda, mission, education, and mobilization. The demand for consistency, methodical regularity, and self-sustained individual responsibility conformed fully to the nature of demands being made in the context of secular employment. Even revivalist religion channeled secularizing tendencies into sections of the population as yet unsocialized.

**Contemporary Manifestations.** Just as religious institutions have ceased to be central in society, and just as society no longer endorses religious goals as its primary ends, so religious consciousness, although less visible as a phenomenon, appears also to have diminished. These different aspects of religiosity reveal varying degrees of persistence. Thus, the formal civic representation of the church in public life is more evident in societies, such as England, with established national churches than in the United States or Germany. Religious schools are more numerous in France and in Belgium (where state and church institutions are alternatives in many departments of social organization) than in England or the United States. Church attendance is significantly higher in North America than in northern Europe, and church membership in the United States is significantly higher than in England. Such national variations reflect different patterns and degrees of secularization. They do not predicate specific consequences (such as, for instance, a growth of atheism) or a determinate loss in church affiliation or in religious observance, even though these consequences often occur. Nor do they preclude the endurance of enclaves of persisting spirituality or the emergence of new expressions of re-







religious commitment. The patterns vary and, despite other indicators of secularization, spiritual survivals and new religious initiatives do occur.

Even so, none of these manifestations of religiosity refutes the evidence of general secularization. Indeed, as religion loses significance in the public arena, we may expect that it will appear correspondingly more conspicuous in private life, commitment becoming more distinctive as it becomes more exceptional. Again, in some societies, involvement in church life may fulfill cultural or social functions little related to intrinsic religiosity and its persistence at relatively high levels of participation (for example, in the United States) may relate more to traditions of voluntarism, the need for community identity, or a generalized search for surrogate national ideology than to the societal, or even the personal, significance of religious faith. Numerous new religious movements have emerged in recent decades, and these may even be seen as a response to general secularization: since they provide meaning, purpose, association, and support for particular sections of the population, their appearance testifies to the inadequacy, irrelevance, or ineffectiveness of the mainstream churches, at least for this particular clientele. Given the traditional exclusivism of Christianity, religious pluralism, to which these new movements are conspicuous testimony, occurs only where secularization is relatively far advanced.

**Causes.** To unravel completely the complex tissue of causal agencies contributing to secularization would be tantamount to reconstructing the entire web of social history. Any trend as pervasive and persistent in the course of human affairs as this one must be extensively related to all other facets of social change. We have noted the way in which conceptual order was developed and rationalized within the evolution of religion itself. Intellectuals (who themselves were often religious functionaries) were responsible for early secularization, but the initial marginalization of all supernaturalism is attributable to a deepening and more reflective apprehension of the natural order. The beginnings of science and, more generally, the development of empirical inquiry, detachment in observation and experimentation, and the sensed need for ordered general concepts (incipient universalism) introduced new assumptions about nature and society. The rational and systematic coordination of empirical knowledge led both to the confutation of received supernaturalist conceptions and to an enhanced awareness of man's own capacity to harness nature and to organize his own economic and social well-being. Eventually, skepticism became steadily institutionalized in science, providing an implicit challenge to untested and untestable hypotheses, even

though many early scientists such as Roger Bacon, Johannes Kepler, Isaac Newton, and Michael Faraday were men whose thought encompassed both rationalist and mystic concerns.

The application of science, particularly to productive activities, and the evolution of new techniques reduced man's sense of dependence on the divine. As society became industrialized and urbanized, increasing proportions of the population came to live their lives and make their livelihoods in ways more removed from nature. The possible intervention of the supernatural into everyday life became less plausible except in the interstices of social organization, that is, in marginal pursuits and interests, and even here only for the minority. New ways of thinking evolved as man came to inhabit an environment that was progressively more and more a product of his own making. Magical, mystical, and metaphysical patterns of thought became steadily less congruous, particularly in all manifestly functional activities, which are governed by well-articulated structures of specific roles. Man's increased capacity to assess and supply his own needs led to the assumption that social well-being depended not on God's providence but on social planning. Whereas in earlier epochs the past had dominated the present—a past sacralized by the supposedly timeless truths of religion—modern society was future-oriented, and that future was mundane and material, no longer the future of postmortem salvation in some supratemporal existence.

Social and geographic mobility, which occurred with increasing intensity in order to accommodate the productive demands and distributive rewards of technological society, promoted individualism and detached men from the stable communal contexts and the settled order of past generations in which religious predilections had themselves been rooted. Simultaneously, social organization became less dependent on the local community. The role-articulated social system necessarily made human beings into its calculable parts, while the social environment, following the natural environment before it, became increasingly man-made. Its rational structures elicited, through the role system, rational patterns of instrumental and impersonal action and neutralized, in relations with others, those personal affective dispositions that religion had traditionally sought to summon and sustain. Eventually, even personal and intimate relationships became invaded by impersonal techniques—for example, in the matter of birth control—so that issues once thought to be very much in the realm of the sacred became matters of rational, calculated planning. Thus the wider course of social change produced secular contexts and induced patterns of rational social action, as well as changes in







## SECULARIZATION

individual consciousness<sup>8</sup> that expunged ideas and assumptions about the supernatural and its derivative dispositions.

**Secularization in Other Contexts.** Secularization is a Western concept descriptive principally of a process that has occurred in Western society, most conspicuously during this century. Certainly, all the world religions in some degree disciplined and systematized immanentist conceptions and magical apprehensions and practices, but they did so with varying persistence and effectiveness. Hinduism and Buddhism, unlike Judaism and Christianity, absorbed or tolerated more primitive supernaturalism rather than excluding or eradicating it. Islam, although theoretically even more rigorously monotheistic than Christianity, lacked effective centralized organization with which to regulate local magical dispositions, which have widely persisted in Muslim societies into the present day. The long-term historical processes favoring secularization—the extension of rational principles to all areas of social life—were less intense and persistent in the Middle East and in Asia. Nonetheless, as industrialization occurs in developing societies, similar pressures accumulate toward the routinizing and rationalizing of work roles, social relationships, and the framework of social and civic order. Technological development brings similar consequences by reducing the significance of religion for the operation of the social system. Yet, since so many local manifestations of immanentist religiosity persist in these contexts, the paradox of a close juxtaposition of overtly magical practices alongside sophisticated industrial techniques is often found. The course of secularization follows a different path and occurs in different sequence from that familiar in the West.

In Latin America, profound religious changes have occurred with the still incipient process of technologization, and developments that were sequential in Europe have been contemporaneous on that continent. Thus, in recent decades there has been a rapid spread of Protestantism (apparently still carrying many facets of the work ethic); political radicalization has occurred (affecting the Roman Catholic church in significant respects); some separation of the Roman Catholic church from the dominant political structure has been effected; and quasi-magical movements (such as Umbanda and Kardecism in Brazil) have significantly rationalized their teaching and organization. Supernaturalism is being relocated within the social system by diverse patterns of change of a secularizing kind.

Some Islamic countries (e.g., Turkey, Egypt, and Tunisia) have undergone considerable secularization, but in others (e.g., Iran) the resurgence of fundamentalist

movements indicates the strains accompanying this process and the extent to which, in the least sophisticated sections of society, religious dispositions can still be mobilized against modernization. A religion in which a specific and concrete system of law occupies so important a place cannot but find itself compromised by the exigencies of modern life. A similar situation, which is a source of conflict between orthodox and liberal (or nonreligious) parties, prevails in Israel, a secular state in which religion retains a unique ideological significance as the locus for a people so often exiled from its mythically promised land. In both Islam and Judaism, religiously enjoined behavior is subject to growing challenge from certain indispensable elements of a modern social system: a rational framework of law (both as an agency of social control and as a regulative instrument for contract); a systematic use of economic incentives and deterrents (whether through a free market or by socialist controls); the use of education to disseminate empirical knowledge, inculcate pragmatic attitudes, and teach rational procedures; and a political system concerned with economic well-being rather than with the implementation of religious principles. Nor is private life exempt from such challenges; for example, a prerequisite of rational social organization, in contradiction of Muslim and Jewish assumptions of male superiority, is equal rights for men and women, an idea that affects such matters as divorce, birth control, custody of children, remuneration for work, and even such customary matters as dress and comportment.

If secularization implied that what had decayed was necessarily a well-integrated and coherent religious tradition, then it might be maintained that this term was inappropriate to Japan, where diverse, loosely related, symbiotic religious traditions never constituted anything remotely equivalent to the "age of faith" of Christian Europe. Nonetheless, it is apparent from the plethora of its traditional magico-religious practices that Japan was eligible for secularization. The Japanese social system operates with only token reference to supernatural assumptions: the emperor is no longer divine. Most Japanese are only loosely attached to Buddhist temples or Shinto shrines. Ancestor worship has sharply declined in recent decades, and in the homes of young people, both the god-shelf (*kamidana*) and the memorial altar (*butsudan*) have become less common. Japan's technological advance has been so rapid, however, that magico-religious dispositions are still far from eclipsed; various magical practices continue in healing, fortune-seeking, and propitiatory acts, some of them institutionalized by the temples or in new religious movements. These phenomena occupy the interstices of institutional







life, but they are as little accommodated to the increasingly rational socioeconomic order as is the Confucian precept of filial piety, which, today, is challenged by the premium that modern technology puts, not on age, but on youth.

In the largely village-centered society of India, religious dispositions remain perhaps more powerful than in most other parts of the world, even if they have less hold in the centers of population and industry. In a society with such strong religious and mystical traditions, the secularizing effects of social change are slow. Even so, the state now stands above religious particularism, declares itself to be a secular state, and has acted against religious tradition in official disavowal of the caste implications of Hinduism. Nor is secularization very apparent in Africa, where christianization and islamization are still proceeding and magic is far from displaced. If the term is to be applied to Africa, it must refer to a relatively early stage of a long-term historical process. Even among the dominant social strata in African states, not everyone has renounced magic, but as the echelons of technical and administrative personnel proliferate, education and experience of urban life are likely to make bush witchcraft less common. Christianity is still growing and still plays a significant role in various institutional spheres, particularly education and health, despite secularization of facilities by some states. Churches remain a powerful focus of voluntary allegiance and provide important links between local, poorly organized communal life and the incipient secularized societal system.

[See also Bureaucracy; Modernity; Modernism; and the more general discussions in Politics and Religion and Society and Religion.]

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BRYAN R. WILSON

**SEDNA.** The concept of an owner, or master, of the animals appears in many hunting and fishing societies. For the Inuit (Eskimo) of Canada and Greenland, for whom sealing was of vital importance, this powerful being was the mistress of seals and other sea animals. Franz Boas, in his monograph about the Inuit on Baffin Island (1888), gave her name as *Sedna*, which probably means "the one down there." Other Inuit groups referred to the Sea Woman under different names, such as *Nerrivik* (Polar Inuit, "the place of the food") and *Nulujuk* (Netsilik Inuit, "the lubricious one").

An origin myth tells how Sedna was once a girl who was thrown overboard from a vessel. While she tried to hang on, her fingers were cut off at the joints. She sank to the bottom of the sea, the segments of her fingers turning into sea mammals, and she became the Sea Woman, who was in control of these animals. According to some Iglulik Inuit and Baffin Islanders, she also ruled over the souls of those who had gone to the undersea land of the dead.

Variants of this myth have been recorded from many localities in Greenland and Canada, but from Alaska only a single reference exists. In some variants an orphan girl is thrown overboard, but more often the myth begins with the story of a girl who was fooled into marrying a petrel that had taken on human form. When her father tried to rescue his unhappy daughter and to take her away, the petrel pursued them and stirred up a heavy storm. The father tried to pacify the petrel by



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## Political Diary

# Brave rhetoric, little action

By Inder Jit

Communalism and religious fundamentalism have been strongly denounced once again in Parliament. The nation has been warned sharply of the mounting menace from the two evils. This time also the alarm has been sounded by the President, Giani Zail Singh, in his address to the two Houses last week. He declared: "Communal and fundamentalist forces, aided and abetted by external elements, are challenging our basic values of nationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism. . . . The situation clearly calls for a reappraisal. . . . Our precious heritage of unity and diversity can be preserved only by fighting all divisive forces." The Giani also did something which I have been repeatedly endeavouring to do for the past four years. He drew Parliament's attention to a resolution adopted by the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) as far back as April 3, 1948 calling upon the government to take steps to eliminate communalism from India's body politic. But, as he candidly admitted in his address prepared by the Union government, the challenge and the threat has greatly grown over the years.

Brave, indeed, splendid words were spoken against the evil last year too and the nation alerted against the mounting danger from communalism. Giani Zail Singh spoke then also on the issue in his address to Parliament. He said: "Communalism continues to pose a serious threat to national unity. It is being reinforced by religious fundamentalism and fanaticism." Not long earlier, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi honestly told the Congress Centenary Session at Bombay: "We proclaim and celebrate the unity of India. It is a fact of transcending significance. But is it not also a fact that most of us, in our daily lives, do not think of ourselves as Indians? We see ourselves as Hindus, Muslims or Christians, or Malayalees, Maharashtrians, Bengalis. . . . And we shed blood to uphold our narrow and selfish denominations. . . . Political parties, State Governments and social organisations promote policies, programmes and ideologies which divide brother from brother and sister from sister. . . . Is this the India for which Mahatma Gandhi and Indira Gandhi sacrificed their lives?"

### Indian fascism

Indira Gandhi also spoke sternly against communalism. Some seven months before her assassination, she declared in the Lok Sabha that communalism was the "biggest divisive factor" in India and they must all antedily fight it. She was speaking on an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha on violent developments in Punjab and Haryana. Two days later, she again thundered on the subject and described

Prof. N. G. Ranga and Mr. Tajmal Hasan. What Nehru said then is like a breath of fresh air even today. But before quoting him I would like to recall another fact. The Assembly resolution went far ahead of the Government and the Congress Working Committee resolutions adopted following the Mahatma's martyrdom. The Government resolution merely stated: "There is no place in India today for any organisation preaching violence or communal hatred. . . . No such organisation will, therefore, be tolerated."

At least one member, Haji Abdul Sattar Haji Ishaq Seth argued during the debate on Mr. Ayyangar's resolution that the ban should be imposed only on organisations "preaching violence and communal hatred" as emphasised by the Government earlier. But Nehru preferred not to dilute the resolution and went along with Mr. Ayyangar's formulation. In fact, Nehru's mind was made from the start. He took the floor soon after Mr. Ayyangar and said: "Sir, before this debate proceeds any further I should like to indicate the attitude of Government in regard to this resolution. Government welcome this resolution and desire to say that they wish to do everything in their power to achieve the objective which lies behind this resolution. After the eloquent speech of the honourable mover I need not say much about the desirability of this resolution. As a matter of fact, it is an inevitable policy which an independent country must adopt. . . . Even in the past, those of us who accepted any measure of communalism erred and acted unwisely and we have suffered greatly for our unwisdom."

### Dangerous alliance

Nehru then added: "In the past conditions were different. But when a country is functioning independently, there is no alternative except to follow this (policy). The only alternative is civil conflict. We have seen as a matter of fact how far communalism in politics has led us; all of us remember the grave dangers through which we have passed and the terrible consequences we have seen. In any event now, there is no other alternative; and we must have it clearly in our minds and in the mind of the country that the alliance of religion and politics in the shape of communalism is a most dangerous alliance and it yields the most abnormal kind of illegitimate brood. . . . The combination of politics and religion, resulting in communal politics is most dangerous combination and must be put an end to. It is harmful to the country as a whole; it is harmful to the majority, but probably it is most harmful to any minority that seeks to have some advantage from it. I think even

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recalled the resolution adopted by the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) in 1948 and bluntly stated that things would not have come to the present tragic pass if only it had been implemented. Importantly, Mr. Charan Singh pressed for implementation of the 1948 resolution the previous year also — in 1983.

The House was then debating an adjournment motion on the Punjab situation following the killing of Mr. Atwal, a DiG of Police, near the Golden Temple. Regrettably, Mrs. Gandhi was not present in the House at this time and the country was denied the opportunity of getting the Prime Minister's response to the Lok Dal leader's demand. The Constituent Assembly (Legislative's) resolution reads as follows: "Whereas it is essential for the proper functioning of democracy and the growth of national unity and solidarity that communalism should be eliminated from Indian life, this Assembly is of the opinion that no communal organisation which by its constitution or by the exercise of discretionary power vested in any of its officers or organs, admits to or excludes from its membership persons on ground of religion, race and caste, or any of them, should be permitted to engage in any activities other than those essential for the bona fide religious, cultural, social and educational needs of the community, and that all steps, legislative and administrative, necessary to prevent such activities should be taken."

What precisely happened in the Constituent Assembly then also meeting as the Central Legislative Assembly? The broad facts deserve to be reproduced now that the President himself has drawn the nation's attention to the resolution brought forward by a leadership fearful of the havoc that communalism might cause again. The resolution was moved by Mr. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar, who later became Speaker of the Lok Sabha. It was supported by an impressive list of members, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, then Prime Minister and leader of the House, and included Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Giani Gurmukh Singh Musaffir,

measures to be taken to give effect to it. Exactly what those administrative and legislative measures might be, it is impossible to say straight-off: it will require the closest scrutiny, certainly the legislative part of it. And presumably the right course for Government will be to consider this matter and see what administrative and — more specially — what legislative measures are necessary to gain this end; and then later when this House meets again, for another session, to consider any recommendations in that respect so far as legislative measures are concerned... Further, the purpose of this resolution, I take it, is also to give a lead to the country in this matter, so that the country may realise as clearly as possible that the only right way for us to function is to do away with communalism in its political aspect in every shape and form. That we accept."

### Ineffective NIC.

Tragically, Nehru did not implement the resolution. Worse, he ignored his own early stand and in 1960 gave respectability to communalism at the instance of Indira Gandhi, then Congress President, by joining hands with the Muslim League to form a coalition Government in Kerala. Alas, this policy has continued to be pursued opportunistically. Even today the Congress-I does not appear to see anything wrong in joining hands with the Muslim League. Hopes of a ban on communal parties were raised in mid-1984 following "operation Blue Star". Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and his close aides took active interest in the matter. But the idea was dropped when Indira Gandhi decided to seek the help of the Majlis Ittehadul Musalmeen in the Andhra Assembly to topple NTR. The National Integration Council was reconstituted last year with great expectations. But it has proved feeble and ineffective. Not a few among the members are responsible for bringing India to its present pass. Meanwhile, communalism has snowballed, as spotlighted by the Ranganath Mishra Commission's report and the recent developments in Punjab. Pious platitudes and double talk will not do. It is time for hard decisions — and concrete action. — INFA.



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# Secularism And Hinduism

## Defining The Debate

By GAUTAM ADHIKARI

THE trishuls and knives have been out for some time. Senas — little more than bunches of wild fanatics, with a dull glow of semi-literacy in their eyes — are now sprouting in every community. There is menace in the air, a communal mugginess that seems to warn of a storm ahead.

In this heavy atmosphere, a few distinguished commentators have revived a debate on Hinduism and secularism. We fortunately remain free to debate any idea under even the most trying of circumstances. Thanks to those farsighted liberals who wrote in the word 'democratic' in the preamble to the Indian Constitution, political and intellectual life in India has remained more lively than in almost any other developing country.

The word 'secular' was also penned into the preamble in 1976. One would have thought that had settled the debate as far as the Congress party and the Indian state were concerned. But the present Prime Minister has just called for a renewed debate on secularism. He does not appear to be quite clear in his mind about the concept. His grandfather had pioneered it in India and his mother had had it written into the Constitution, but he insists that though "we would like to say we are secular", most of us are not sure what it means.

It may be time for incorrigible secularists to step into the debate since others have already joined it. Actually, it can be seen as a problem of definition and understanding of the two key words, Hinduism and secularism.

Mr Rajiv Gandhi observes that secularism "cannot be indifferent to religion". In a sense he is right. Secularism has historically been locked in a battle with religions of various brands and has, therefore, never really been indifferent to its opponent. But there should be no mistake about a singular characteristic of secularism. It is an ideology — howsoever 'open' it may be — competing against organised religions of all kinds.

Jawaharlal Nehru knew this well as did a number of early Indian liberals of similar persuasion. But at some stage, perhaps owing to Gandhiji's influence, not to mention the violence generated by rival religious groups in the last leg of the independence movement, he may have compromised on conceptual clarity. He came to accept secularism to mean tolerance of all religions. The word itself came to be translated as *dharma-nirpekshata*, which is a canopy concept, distinguished by its ahistorical vagueness from the essence of the original meaning.

### Historical Context

There is little point in arguing that the precise meaning is irrelevant or as the Prime Minister has hinted, that the concept has to be Indianised. It is not like producing a Maruti-Suzuki car and calling it Indian. Secularism has an historical context in which it grew as a concept and has a reasonably precise definition. You can apply it in the Indian circumstance or not, that is your choice, but you cannot change the definition and still call it secularism.

Secularism appears to have begun in Europe in the Middle Ages. Its pursuit has historically involved the attempt to establish an autonomous sphere of knowledge purged of

supernatural, apocalyptic and faith-based presuppositions. That group of thinkers known as the Schoolmen possibly began it all by drawing a distinction between faith and knowledge. For instance, the school of St. Thomas Aquinas had interpreted reason as merely a preliminary to faith and thus minimised the contradiction between rational knowledge and revelatory wisdom. But Duns Scotus and Ockham submitted a radical thesis: that all doctrines of faith are permeated with contradictions which reason is incapable of accepting. Reason, therefore, can operate only in a domain of verifiable experience and not in any supernatural world.

Gradually, secularism became identified with the pursuit of scientific knowledge as opposed to the dogmatic defence of religious wisdom. In Europe, the growth of Protestantism and, more importantly, capitalism with its consequent impact on political structures, helped establish secular state power which was distinct from and in competition with ecclesiastical power.

To cut a long story short, secularism is a revolt against theological and metaphysical absolutes. In politics, it means a separation of religion from political life and the establishment of the state as an independent, and contending, fountainhead of power.

So, what would secularisation of a modern nation involve? The thread that runs through its various definitions attempted by historians and scholars shows secularism to be a sceptical doctrine which opposes religious education and supports the separation of religious power from all matters concerning the state.

### Fringe Movement

Secularisation has been clearly defined as "the decline of religion". In India, we often tend to argue over who is more secular — the Hindu, the Muslim, the Sikh or the Jain? The argument is meaningless. You cannot have a 'secular Hindu' or a 'secular Muslim', you can only have a 'secular Indian'. Well, there was a fringe movement called 'secular Christianity' that began in the West in sympathetic response to secularism in the early 20th century but it fizzled out mainly, because church power and secularism are hopelessly incompatible.

We may try to prepare a checklist on secularism for a modern nation. This again is taken from established works of historians and sociologists.

At its minimum, secularism would mean the decline in the prestige and power of religious teachers. It would also mean the end of state support for religious bodies; it could even mean the withdrawal of state support for religious teaching in schools, unless it aids scientific or historical enquiry. All religious considerations for appointments to public office would have to be done away with while there could be no specific legislative protection for religious doctrines, organisations or sects. Above all, a state calling itself secular and, therefore, in competition with religious organisations, would have to encourage actively the questioning of religious dogmas.

Obviously, Indian politicians have found this to be a steep order. And yet they have felt the need to incorporate the word secularism in the Constitution. Secularism has

nothing against private religious feeling or the individual pursuit of religion but it definitely demands the exclusion of religion from public life or from affairs of the state. It cannot mean Prime Ministers visiting temples or mosques to the glare of television cameras. It cannot mean the breaking of coconuts or lighting of sacred lamps to launch ships or to inaugurate seminars. It cannot mean the encouragement of religious rituals and countless other penultions to religion in public life. In other words, Indian secularism has been a bit of a non-starter. Perhaps Mr Gandhi will be inclined to give it a serious try after he has drawn his conclusions from the current debate. Or he might decide to abandon it formally, but he will have to make a clear choice.

The other word in the debate is Hinduism. When the suffix 'ism' is added to a proper noun in the sociopolitical sphere, it generally means the creation of an ideology. A religion, after all, is a complete system of ideas and norms.

### Political Angle

There was never any ideology or religion called Hinduism at any stage in the history of India till the concept was politicised in the process of national awakening in the latter half of the 19th century. That was when political Hinduism, which was clearly a religion or an ideology, was born. Swamis Vivekananda and Dayanand Saraswati, among others, gave it definable contours and the latter in particular injected into Hinduism a strong ideological content.

Once again, we have to cut short a long story. Its substance is that there was indeed an ancient civilisation which could broadly, in geographical and nonreligious terms, be defined as Hinduism. This is what they mean when they call Hinduism 'a way of life' as distinct from a 'religion'. A civilisation is indeed a way of life.

Interestingly, a leading commentator, while discussing the debate in this newspaper, made a statement which he followed up with this sentence: "And I would say this not just as a secularist but also as a self-conscious Hindu who is deeply interested in the survival and growth of the Hindu civilisation". Notice the use of 'secularist' and 'Hindu' in the same context. As we have seen, they are self-contradictory if Hinduism is to be an ideology. However, the commentator is clearly talking about Hinduism as a civilisation in which case it need not be a contradiction.

Unfortunately, today the concept of Hinduism as a civilisation has been swamped by a series of contentious events over a hundred years. It is now understood to be a religion and an ideology in competition with every other religion in this subcontinent. To revise that perception would require years, perhaps decades, of patient re-education to say nothing of a re-analysis of history. That will take time even if you assume that it will work.

In the meantime, it would perhaps be quite dangerous for the stability of this nation to push Hinduism as an all-encompassing *brahmanic* ideology which must necessarily subordinate not just other religions but even the competing modern ideology of secularism.

Secularism is a concept to replace religion

Secularism - a canopy concept

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# Secularism And Hinduism

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Unfortunately, today the concept of Hinduism as a civilisation has been swamped by a series of contentious events over a hundred years. It is now understood to be a religion and an ideology in competition with every other religion in this subcontinent. To revise that perception would require years, perhaps decades, of patient re-education to say nothing of a re-analysis of history. That will take time even if you assume that it will work.

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# Secularists & Communalists

## Why Both Are Wrong

By GIRILAL JAIN

THE Hindu civilization is different from other great civilizations — Christian-western and Arab Islamic — in one significant respect. Unlike them, it is virtually confined to one geographical area — the present-day India. And since the Hindus happen to be in an overwhelming majority in that area it can indeed must, serve as the basis of an Indian national community and identity.

This proposition is, however, not widely accepted, the general view being that the Hindu civilization has not served such a role. This view finds expression in the talk of Hindu communalism and Hindu backlash on the one hand and of a Hindu rashtra on the other. Whether we realise it or not, these are two faces of the same coin. If the first proposition implies that the Hindus have taken, or are about to take, to sectarianism which would exclude the followers of other religions from full membership of the Indian national community, the second suggests that the Hindus have been deprived of their rightful place in "their own country" in the same name of secularism.

Commentators have by and large been divided into two rival camps on this issue. While the "secularists", Hindu or non-Hindu, have spotlighted the supposed danger of a Hindu backlash, the Hindu "communalists" have been tireless in their condemnation of Nehru who, in their view, imposed secularism on the country and thereby denied the Hindus their due. To the best of our knowledge, no one has disputed the validity of the two propositions simultaneously. Yet this is precisely what needs to be done if we are to gain a proper perspective on modern Indian history.

Independent India is essentially a Hindu creation and, as any honest observer will concede, it seeks to be a liberal-humanist order which is committed not to discriminate against the non-Hindus. Thus both cries of a Hindu backlash and a betrayal of the national heritage are misplaced. The Hindus are not about to engage in a systematic persecution of the minorities and they have not been denied, indeed they could not have been denied, an opportunity to shape India according to their genius.

### Important Period

To establish the proper context in which this debate can be meaningful, we have to go back to the 18th century. This period, extending into the 19th and even the 20th century, witnessed developments of great importance in our country which it is virtually impossible to discuss in this article. Here we can only mention some of them.

This period witnessed the disintegration of the Moghul empire and the emergence of a revivalist movement among the Muslims (the two coincided), the assertion of Hindu power on a regional basis (the Marathas in western India, the Bhumihars in the Banaras region and the Jat Sikhs in north-western India, for example), steady expansion of the East India Company's political and military power leading finally to its complete ascendancy in the sub-continent, and reform movements among the Hindus (including Christian) ideas and ideals and enabled them to protect themselves against Christian proselytisation.

The Muslim chieftains played a major role in bringing about the downfall of the Moghul empire. But

this fact is not particularly relevant for a discussion of subsequent developments. We are principally concerned with the Hindu reassertion, the steady decline of Muslim hegemony, cultural and political, the accompanying revivalist-fundamentalist movement among them, the triumph of the British East India Company and the difference in the consolidation of British power and the ideas and ideals that came with it.

Thus while the Muslim elite tended to withdraw into a shell and to emphasise its religious-cultural character, a section of the Hindu elite, such as it was, took to western ideas and ways with some enthusiasm. Similarly, unlike among the Hindus, there was no reform movement among the Muslims which sought to introduce them to western ideas and ideals and to persuade them to adjust themselves to the new dominant world culture. The Muslims later took to western education but in a spirit of defensiveness. Their behaviour took an aggressive form vis-a-vis the Hindu, leading to the country's partition. But vis-a-vis the West they remained on the defensive.

Nothing like an all-India Hindu community or elite existed up to the later part of the 19th century. The Hindu challenge to Muslim power was regional in character. It is doubtful whether they could have prevailed on their own if the British had not moved in to take over the governance of India and whether one united India could have emerged as a result of the Hindu assertion.

### Forward Looking

The all-India Hindu elite, as we have known it for over 100 years, emerged as a result of developments listed above; being the product of western education and social reform movements this elite looked forward rather than backward for self-fulfilment; if it did not disown its ancient heritage, it initiated and welcomed radical changes in the Hindu social arrangement; it sought to justify these changes in terms of India's own heritage but the changes were without question inspired by western ideas and practices. Finally, the Hindu elite sought salvation for itself and the Hindu society in the western concept of a modern nation-state and not in a return to a mythical golden age. In other words, the Hindu elite sought to make a political community out of the Hindu society. The Indian National Congress was to be the principal instrument for achieving this goal.

These developments defined the power realities on the ground but not the debate. The issue towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century was, therefore, not whether or not the Hindus and the Muslims had cooperated to forge a composite culture, or the extent to which the Hindu environment had continued to influence the lives of those who had got converted to Islam. The power balance had shifted in favour of the Hindu elite and against the Muslim elite. The issue, therefore, was whether the Muslim elite was willing to accept not only the new West-inspired idea-value system but also the leadership of the Hindu elite.

For the Muslim elite the two issues of modernisation (westernisation) and acceptance of the Hindu elite leadership were not interlinked. Indeed, Sayyid Ahmed Khan, the ideological father of separatist thinking leading to the formation of Pakistan,

proposed that the Muslims modernise and cooperate with the British in order to be able to resist the Hindu elite leadership and demand for the right to self-rule which to him was synonymous with Hindu rule. The dominant view among the tradition-bound elite, on the other hand, was that they resist modernisation and British power and cooperate with the Congress. As we know, the modernisers were and the traditionalists lost the battle among the Muslims in the political realm but only in the political realm. A reversal of fortunes too would have created serious problems for the country's political order. But that is a different issue which does not concern us in this article.

### Natural Product

Be that as it may the ascendancy of modernised Hindus was in a sense a natural product of the new power configuration arising out of the decline of the Moghul empire and the consolidation of the British rule. The British, as is well known, tried to frustrate this ascendancy. They conceded separate electorate to the Muslim League with that end in view in 1906 and subsequently took a number of other steps. But they failed.

The reasons for this failure of the British design have not been investigated in India because we have not even recognised that British failed in their design. We have been so traumatised, quite rightly, by the fact of partition that we have not paused and asked ourselves whether a worse fate would not have overtaken us if instead of being polarised along religious/communal lines, the country had been organised by the British on the basis of language and its political evolution directed along those lines.

The government of India Act of 1935 could have promoted developments along those frightening lines if World War II had not intervened and unleashed a chain of events which cumulatively overwhelmed the 1935 Act. Surprisingly though it may appear, Jinnah's role was perhaps crucial in this regard. In the negotiations for the transfer of power, he blocked the so-called Punjab solution whereby provinces were to be grouped on a religious basis and given the right to secede and whereby the Centre's powers were to be severely restricted.

The partition, however unfortunate and fearful in its consequences, could, however, have only placed the ascendancy of the Hindu elite beyond challenge and Nehru's concept of secularism, however defined, could not have undermined it. In fact, it has not been undermined. Nothing could illustrate this point better than the fact that the politically relevant divides in the country — the Dalits versus the non-Dalits, the so-called backward castes vis-a-vis the "progressive" castes and Hindi versus English as the link language — are intra-Hindu divides and not Hindu-non-Hindu ones.

It was possible that Nehru could not overcome the trauma of the partition and that he, therefore, thought and acted defensively. Alternatively he either failed to recognise the simple truth that nationalism can never be culturally neutral or that he sincerely believed that India's cultural traditions were too diverse to serve as the basis of Indian nationalism. Anyway Indian nationalism remains unrooted which is what gives the self-conscious Hindu a feeling of deprivation.



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# Communalism & Regionalism

## Products Of Secularisation

By GIRILAL JAIN

WHILE there is no dearth of Indians who question the validity of the concept of secularism for their country, no Indian has ever disputed that it is an antidote to communalism. This is truly extraordinary and speaks of the grip a slogan can acquire on our collective mind.

Currently a debate is on in the media on the proper meaning of secularism. In this debate the modernists and the modernisers have argued that secularism should not be interpreted as equal respect for all religions or as non-discrimination on religious grounds, as we in India have done all these years. Instead secularism must be interpreted in the original sense of separation of the church and the state and an assertion of the supremacy of reason in the life of the individual and society.

Like much else, this debate arises out of a misapplication of the western experience to ourselves and an "idealisation" of the western reality. The first point is easily settled. For there can be no question of separation of the state and the church in societies such as ours which do not possess a church in the western-Christian sense of the term.

The second assertion regarding the supremacy of reason is also open to question on two counts. First, it proclaims that Christianity has ceased to be a potent force in the West which is not the case. It is common knowledge, for instance, that the Vatican has played an important role in shaping the politics of Italy and ensuring the survival in office of Christian democrats for over three decades. While the Vatican has not been similarly influential in other West European countries, Christianity as such has been. Christian Democrats have ruled in West Germany most of the time since World War II. In Poland in eastern Europe the Catholic church acts as the guardian of Polish nationalism in its struggle against Russian domination, a fact which even the communist rulers cannot ignore. Above all, we have witnessed the rise of the "born again" Christian phenomenon in the United States, the birthplace of secular politics.

### False Statement

Secondly, the statement implies that superstition and not reason has been the dominant influence in non-European civilizations, including, if not especially, ours. This is one of the many falsehoods which western orientalists spread about us and which we have bought so much so that even our great leaders have been influenced by them. One has only to read Indian history by James Mill in the 19th and by Vincent Smith in the 20th century to know how they have misrepresented us and yet dominated our thinking.

Finally, the debate has proceeded on the erroneous assumption that communalism and secularism are two poles with nothing in between. In reality communalism, as we know it, is the result of the impact of western (secular) education on the different segments of our society. And so are regionalism and nationalism of which we have not yet heard the last. Indeed, it is on the cards that as the process of modernisation (secularisation) gathers momentum, the threat to the country's unity from these forces may increase rather than decrease and disappear. To appreciate the validity of this conclusion, it will be useful to re-examine the history of the rise of Muslim separatism.

Pakistani historians have traced Muslim separatism/communalism back to the invasion of Sind by Muhammad Bin Qasim in the 8th century. This is a self-serving view which has little support in historical evidence. For at least up to the end of the 17th century the Indian Muslims were not sufficiently self-aware and well defined. They carried many Hindu social practices with them into Islam and preserved them. Most of them did not even have Muslim names. They were also not a ruling community because the ruling elite under various Muslim dynasties and rulers came from outside India; the nobles were either Persians or Turks. The illusions of grandeur in this regard were the products of a much later period. These were born during the British

Then there is the second school of historians which traces the rise of Muslim separatism/communalism to Shah Wali-Ul-Allah in the early 18th century. There is more merit in this proposition than in the previous one. But the Shah was a revivalist who sought to prevent the adaptation of Islam to the Indian cultural environment, and to link it with the Arab Islam. In other words, he was a pan-Islamist and not a potential father of Indian Muslim nationalism.

### Aligarh School

The turning point, in my opinion, was the rise of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh school of Muslim modernisers. Three points about Sir Sayyid are well known—that he sought to reconcile the Muslim elite and through it the Muslim populace to the British rule; that he tried to re-interpret the Koran so that it could be seen to be in conformity with modern science; and that he campaigned against Muslims joining the Congress. There is, however, another point about him which deserves attention. Sir Sayyid was the first prominent Indian Muslim leader who said goodbye to pan-Islamism. In the specific context of India, he laid the basis of modern Muslim communalism.

This Muslim communalism might not have been possible without the revivalism (Arabisation) which Shah Wali-ul-Allah had initiated in the early 18th century; for without it Muslims might not have become sufficiently distinguishable from the Hindus. But Muslim communalism did not represent an attempt at reaffirmation of orthodox Islam. It was the result of introduction of western (secular) education and of the attempt to reinterpret the scriptures to make them acceptable to modern (rational) men. Indian Muslim communalism was a form of radicalism. It represented a departure from orthodox Islam. By that reckoning, only a modernist such as Mohammad Ali Jinnah could lead it and not the Maulvi assembled in Deoband or Lucknow.

There is no fatal inevitability in human affairs. So it is impermissible to argue that Jinnah was a logical successor to Sir Sayyid, or that it was unavoidable that he raised the demand for a Muslim homeland, or that he was bound to succeed in dividing the country. But if Sir Sayyid's legacy had to be picked up, only a modernist like Jinnah could have done so; similarly, the Muslim could be mobilised only on the separate homeland platform after the pan-Islamic platform had collapsed with the abolition of Khilafat by Turkish nationalists themselves.

When the Muslim League under Jinnah's leadership adopted the Pakistan demand at its Lahore session in 1940, the Muslims were not a viable political community by any definition. The League had fared badly in the provincial elections in 1937 in reserved constituencies. In all Muslim-majority provinces local parties serving dominant local interests in co-operation with similar non-Muslim interests opposed to the Congress had captured power. All in all, it is unlikely that Jinnah could have made the League the formidable power it became by 1945 and himself emerged as the main spokesman of Indian Muslims if circumstances had not been highly propitious.

### Cripps's Mission

The Congress had quit office and its leaders had courted imprisonment, leaving the field open to the League; affronted by Gandhiji's opposition to the war effort, the British openly sided with the League; and as early as 1942, that is barely two years after the adoption of the Lahore resolution by the League, the British government indicated through the Cripps mission its willingness to accept the principle of partition. But even if the League had been kept in check, if Jinnah had died a frustrated man and India had achieved independence without partition, Muslim communalism could not have been contained for ever. The seed Sir Sayyid (or British teachers) had sown was bound to grow into a tree and bear fruit.

While the Muslims had become sufficiently united against the Hindus to be able to force partition, they had not become a nation in their own right. This became apparent within years of partition. Pakistan virtually banned immigration of Muslims from India, thus repudiating the concept of a Muslim homeland; for all practical purposes the Muslim League disappeared as an effective instrument of forging unity among the country's different linguistic-ethnic-cultural units; these units began to resent Punjab's domination, exercised through the army and the bureaucracy, and to pull in different directions, culminating finally in the establishment of an independent Bangladesh. But it does not follow that the Muslim assertion could have got dissipated and been contained in united India. On the contrary, with the help of the bogey of Hindu domination it could have got consolidated.

Once Pakistan came into existence, the other divide in the sub-continent (language) began to operate in that country. The same divide did not become equally effective in India partly because the Congress party, much better led and organised, was able to cater to the aspirations of various language groups, partly because democracy provided a safety valve, and partly because no one unit dominated India as Punjab dominated Pakistan. But the current upsurge of extremism and terrorism in Punjab does not leave much room for complacency for us. This upsurge too is the result of the erosion of tradition and the impact of modernisation (secularisation) on the Sikh youth. Bhindranwale was not a fundamentalist in the sense that he wanted to restore the past. He was only using religious symbols in the pursuit of an independent Khalistan. How are we to cope with the problem of national integration? This would form the subject of another article.

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# WORKING CLASS AND SECULARISM

S. G. SARDESAI

## I

FROM its very beginning the working class movement in India, as in all capitalist countries, has been confronted by the divisive and reactionary forces based on religion. In our specific conditions this has naturally involved a struggle against casteism and communalism. In fact, by and large, it can be stated without exaggeration that our working class has been less infected by the virus of communalism and fought more against its separatist politics than any other class in India.

This is, by no means, an idealist or biased glorification of the working class. Class solidarity, irrespective of differences in language, creed or nationality is the indispensable requisite of the struggle of the working class against capitalist exploitation. A secular outlook is an unavoidable necessity for the unity of the working class and the advance of its movement.

Naturally enough, even workers do not learn this lesson in a day, in a single strike struggle, or in a brief period. As they come on the stage of history with the advent of modern, industrial capitalism, they are subject to the same social divisions and ideological

influences as are inherited by other classes in society. It is sustained class struggles that enable them to overcome caste and communal prejudices and develop a new sense of brotherhood.

Besides, with the rapid development of industry ever larger numbers drawn from the peasantry and the middle class keep on joining the ranks of the working class. They have to learn the meaning of proletarian class consciousness and unity through their own experience just like their predecessors. Hence, as in all democratic elements, our working class movement, too, has been characterised by a constant, running battle for secularism and against religious obscurantism and disruptionism.

## II

IN the very early years of the trade union struggle in India, before the first World War, our working class was drawn from the lower castes in the country. The Koshtis, the Padmashalis, the Julahas, the Momins, who were the traditional spinners and weavers among the Hindus and the Muslims, were drawn into the mechanised leather industry. Even in the railways only the lowest castes were employed as gangmen and in certain other categories of employment.

Indian society being what it is, even today the scavengers in towns and cities, though they are now fully wage earning workers, are drawn from the Mehtar community. While in socially advanced cities like Bombay their struggles are led by general municipal workers' trade unions, in Delhi we still witness the phenomenon of the Balmiki Samaj leading the sweepers' strike.

The point to note is that the early class awakening among workers in India was often intermingled with their caste background. The growing reality of life, the reality that they were being transformed from artisans and menials in a caste society into the modern wage-earning working class in capitalist society compelled them to unite and fight as workers. On the other hand, they had not yet outgrown the legacy of their past social formations and status.

It was the gigantic and nationwide wave of strike struggles following in the wake of the first World War that gave birth to the militant, class conscious trade union movement in India and to functioning, stable well-organised trade unions. From that time onward both the positive and negative features of capitalist industrial development have led our working class movement to a growing consciousness of its class ideology and solidarity and to a sharpening struggle against the divisive forces of caste and religion.

## III

THE positive aspect of capitalist development has been that it has drawn workers belonging to different castes and religions indiscriminately in all industries, in various mills, factories, workshops and so on. There are now any number of Brahmins working even in the leather industry, in the Bata factories, for instance. The standardised and uniform working conditions in the factories made the workers realise that in their struggle to secure better wage

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working conditions and finally to abolish capita-  
exploitation they have no alternative but to over-  
their caste and religious prejudices and to unite  
propertyless wage earners. They have to accept  
common class ideology in place of one based on  
region and caste which divides them into numberless  
fighting groups.

It is significant that in many working class centres  
unions have carried on a sustained campaign  
against untouchables being housed in separate chawls  
not being allowed to take water from common taps.  
Bombay, it was in the hotels and restaurants in the  
working class areas that the practice of keeping sepa-  
rate cups and utensils for Muslim or untouchable  
workers first came to an end. And it was the workers  
who insisted on ending the discriminatory practice.

But capitalism "teaches" the working class to fight  
communal prejudices and animosities in a negative  
also, and a most vicious way at that.

While as a general rule capitalist industry brings  
workers together in common employment, when-  
ever possible the employers have also attempted to  
keep them apart on a caste or religious basis.

For instance, in the textile industry, the mill own-  
ers did not employ untouchables in the weaving  
department for a very long period. They were restric-  
ted to the spinning department. The purpose obviously  
was to maintain an untenable wage distinction be-  
tween spinners and weavers and to prevent the deve-  
lopment of mutual sympathy and support in wage  
struggles by exploiting caste prejudices between the  
workers. It was only the united struggles of weavers and  
spinners that broke through this invidious distinction  
to a larger extent.

Worse still, for decades and decades the employers  
have attempted to enrol Muslim strike breakers if the  
working workers happened to be Hindus, and vice  
versa. Caste differences have also been exploited for  
strike breaking. Even further, for many years the  
working class movement in Bombay was attempted  
to be given a non-Brahmin twist by the employers'  
agents under the specious plea that a number of the  
leaders of the movement were of Brahmin origin.

#### IV

One should realise therefore the terrific odds against  
which the Indian working class has had to fight  
and the bitter experience through which it has had  
to pass in order to overcome the virus of communa-  
lism from its ranks which, though partly inherited, has  
been systematically exploited and attempted to be  
perpetuated by the employers for their own selfish and  
reactionary ends.

The working class learns the lesson of secularism  
from yet another angle. Repeatedly it finds that while  
the employers fan and foment all kinds of communal  
differences among the workers for dividing and weaken-  
ing their movement for better living standards, the  
workers themselves always band together against the  
employers irrespective of religious and caste differences.  
The fact that the owners of industry, as a class, join  
together to defeat and suppress the workers' movement

has no doubt contributed to the common class con-  
sciousness of our working class.

Dozens of illustrations can be cited from our  
history, both of the pre-independence and post-inde-  
pendence period, when workers have maintained com-  
munal harmony and peace within their ranks on occa-  
sions when whole towns and cities in the country have  
been engulfed in the flames of Hindu-Muslim strife. In  
the nationwide communal holocaust experienced  
in India at the time of partition, the few islands of  
unity and amity that could yet be preserved were  
found in some of the working class centres in the country  
certain red bases in the rural areas. As recently  
only two years ago, at the time of the communal  
butchery at Bhiwandi and Jalgaon, the only areas  
the latter city which maintained communal har-  
mony and in which no incendiary could penetrate were  
mohallas inhabited by class-conscious, red flag-work-  
ers.

It can be frankly stated, even at the cost of a  
repetition, that all this does not mean that the work-  
ing class is immune from communal prejudices or con-  
flicts. It is no doubt subject to the social system in which  
it is born and the environment in which it lives and  
works. But by and large it is a fact that fraternal  
communal conflict in our urban areas does not  
arise in the working class. It is carried there  
outside.

#### V

Going beyond the sphere of the struggle of the  
working class for its economic demands into the sphere  
of general democratic politics, once again we find  
it is the working class that has been least under the  
influence of communal parties and is also the backbone  
of left and democratic, secular political parties.

As early as in 1907 the working class of Bombay  
came out on a powerful protest strike against the  
savage sentence of five years passed on Lokanath  
Tilak by the Bombay High Court. The strike  
lasted for five days in which police stations were attacked.  
Again, in the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920  
workers in various parts of India, including rural  
workers, repeatedly went on strike in support of  
the freedom movement, quite often without the guidance  
or support of the Congress leadership. The  
phenomenon was repeated in the 1930 Civil Disobedi-  
ence Movement, and even more militantly on the  
occasion of the R.I.N. Mutiny in 1940.

The history of our working class movement is  
not only a testimony to its unity in economic struggles  
but equally in national, anti-imperialist, political  
struggles. And all these struggles were invariably oppo-  
sed by communal leaders, whether Hindu or Muslim.

No wonder that in the post-independence period  
the Jana Sangh has nowhere been able to get a  
hold in the working class. With all its pseudo-left  
radical slogans meant to attract the working class  
efforts to build a trade union movement under  
leadership have failed.

Coming to parliamentary politics dominating  
working class constituencies almost everywhere  
candidates of Left parties or the Congress. This applies  
equally to municipal, State and Parliamentary



tions. The Jana Sangh cuts little ice here. Even in dominantly Muslim working class constituencies there are not a few where the electorate supports Left parties or the Congress against the Muslim League and other Muslim organisations.

## VI

WHILE dealing with the question of the role of working class in the struggle for secular democracy it is necessary to take cognisance of another very serious problem which has developed into menacing proportions during the sixties and even more so in the seventies. That is the problem of linguistic chauvinism. By itself, it does not fall in the sphere of the problem of secularism, but all over India we are witnessing the sight of the forces of communalism joining hands with those of linguistic chauvinism, and in certain cases, even mingling together. In the concrete struggle for secularism we are now confronted by something like a two-headed monster.

The tradition of our working class movement has been one of uniting all workers, not only irrespective of caste and religion, but also of language. But recent economic developments in the country have placed an immense strain on its unity from the linguistic end, which was not so even a decade ago.

- Massive and constantly growing unemployment, both of manual and intellectual workers; the extremely uneven economic development of various States and of regions within a given State; the consequent phenomenal increase in people migrating from one part of the country to another in search of employment; the fact that government service is by far the biggest avenue of employment in the country; these are the vital, basic factors which have sharply aggravated the linguistic conflict in the country during the last ten years.

Naturally enough, the monopoly interests in land, industry and trade who are totally opposed to the solution of the unemployment problem by advancing towards socialism seize upon this "opportunity" to whip up every kind of linguistic and regional conflict. Thereby they aim at killing two birds with one stone. They divert socialistically oriented popular anger against the vested interests into linguistic or regional conflict by leading it to believe that the unemployment problem can be solved by demanding jobs for the "sons of the soil". And worse, they disrupt the multilingual, nationwide unity of the workers (industrial and educated) which is their only weapon for fighting monopoly interests and for improving living standards.

All over India we now witness the spectacle of the Jana Sangh lining up with all chauvinistic, regional movements to fish in troubled waters and unleash disruptive violence. The Shiv Sena is not only linguistically chauvinist, it is equally communal, anti-Muslim. Muslim reaction in its turn has been inciting communal passion on the issue of the amended Aligarh University Act.

While our working class even today, is comparatively less drawn into linguistic frenzy than the middle class, it has to be recognised that our trade union movement has yet to take up the struggle against

linguistic chauvinism with the passion and zeal which it has always fought the poison of communalism.

## VII

THERE is yet another aspect of the struggle for secularism which is very real though; at glance the relation between the two may not appear self-evident.

And that arises from the fact that all these secular, communal forces in the country, Hindu Muslim or any other (and in passing, one should mention similar forces in Pakistan as well) are invariably, pro-imperialist pro-American, anti-Soviet against the colonial liberation movement in any part of the world.

In sharp contrast, the working class movement is basically international, anti-imperialist, oriented towards socialism and supports all national liberation movements. Naturally it is pro-Soviet and against the aggressive policies of U.S. Imperialism.

It is an unquestionable fact, borne out by repeated experience that, the working class movement in the country has been in the forefront of the struggle against the colonial, and now the neo-colonial policy of imperialism. It has consistently exposed American intrigues and subversive conspiracies in India, highlighted by the intensified activities of the CIA.

The movement has been in the forefront of the struggle for giving all-out support to Vietnam. It stood by the Arab countries against Zionist aggression, which has a direct bearing on the struggle against Hindu communalism in India. It has always wanted to reduce Indo-Pak tension, to build peaceful relations with Pakistan which, in fact, is a vital issue of confrontation with the constant, bellicose agitation of the Jana Sangh. Indo-Pak relations is the most provocative issue utilised by the Jana Sangh for fomenting Hindu-Muslim tension and violence in the country.

This is how problems of foreign policy have become inseparable from our internal struggle for secular democracy and against the virus of communalism.

To sum up, the trade union movement in India, or, more broadly, the working class movement, has not only made a valuable contribution to the secularisation of our politics. Its contribution has been a distinctive character.

It has been valuable in the sense that the working class is relatively the least communally affected in the country and the most consistent advance guard of the battle against communalism. Its role has been limited to advocating peace and amity between caste and religious communities and preserving social peace. It has been one of an active, militant struggle against the forces of caste and communalism.

The distinctive character of the contribution of the working class goes further and deeper.

Because of its basic class character, i.e. as a class in fundamental conflict with capitalism, it sees, more clearly than any other democratic class in society, the vital link between religious superstition, communalism, casteism etc. and the exploitative interests of the ruling classes. It clearly sees

SEGULAR DEMOCRACY



# SECULARISATION AND LEFT

O. P. SANGAL

## VIII

communal ideology as the instrument of the vested interests for dividing the unity of the toiling people and intensifying their exploitation. As such, it fights on both fronts simultaneously, in a more co-ordinated way, and hits at the very fountain-spring of communal separatism and practices, namely, the economic power of private property in the means of production.

This is something from which all healthy elements of society who value and defend secular politics have much to learn.

It is common among many democratic elements, particularly the liberal intelligentsia, to look upon secular democracy as just a question of separating the state, its functions, and politics in general from religion and religious practices. And to this is added the view that the basic principles of all religions are universal, so that, once religion is separated from politics, people of different faiths and creeds will live in peace and harmony. No less a person than Gandhi held this view. And so does Vinoba Bhave. The standpoint of most progressive Congressmen is essentially the same.

This outlook is good as far as it goes but both in theory and practice it has serious limitations for achieving the aim of secular democracy. It is as good as saying that if the tiger is kept out of the jungle, the problem of its depredations will be solved. Unfortunately, so long as the tiger is there it will continue to make every effort to break into the house, and at every unguarded moment, surely will. To apply the metaphor, the jungle of our society is infested with communal tigers who will not cease to enter the house of democracy no matter how many times they are turned out of it.

The fundamental base of communal reaction, as of all reaction, in modern society is landed property and monopoly capital. Hence, unless reaction is attacked at the base, it can never be thoroughly rooted out, fought to a finish.

Neither the Jana Sangh and other Hindu communalists nor the various brands of Muslim communalism ever make a distinction between their communal outlook and policies, and their defence of landed property and big capital, their pro-Americanism and anti-Sovietism, their anti-working class and anti-democratic outlook. Very consciously, they roll all these outlooks and policies into a single, indivisible whole.

Secular democrats have to do the same, naturally in the reverse. They have to fight communalism all along the line, in every sphere of socio-economic, political and cultural life.

In this sense, socialist ideology and the struggle for socialism alone are the ultimate solvents of communal reaction. And it is the working class, our working class movement that is the torch-bearer and spearhead of our struggle for socialism. Therein lies the most valuable and distinctive role of the working class in the struggle to purge our political life of communalism, the struggle to secularise our politics, the struggle to reach the highest pinnacle of secular democracy.

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## I

THE left by its nature is secular; hence its very birth in the third decade of this century was a contribution to secularization of Indian politics.

The Moderates were no doubt secular in their outlook, but since their emphasis was mainly on securing redress from the Imperial authority of such grievances of the upper social groups as the lack of adequate representation in the far from powerful legislature, recruitment to Imperial services, their political activity inevitably encouraged competition between the Hindu upper classes and the Muslim upper classes.

The terrorist revolutionaries, on the other hand, standing at the other end of the Indian political spectrum of those days, were committed to overthrowing the British rule by force, but many of them were religious to the core and used the religious appeal to win popular sympathy and new recruits. In Bengal the cult of the bomb was intertwined with the cult of the Kali. In Punjab, a majority of terrorist revolutionaries were born out of either the Akali or the Samaj movements of religious reform.

Even the 1921 non-cooperation mass movement which under the leadership of Gandhiji and the Brothers became a movement of Hindu-Muslim fraternisation, was not without its non-secular tones. One of the two central issues raised by the movement—the Punjab wrong and the restoration of the Khilafat—was clearly non-secular. It was a first time it drew masses of Indian people into a political confrontation with British imperialism. It was at the same time a non-secular movement not only because of the religious language it used but also because it sought to build the unity of the Hindus and the Muslims and Hindus and Muslims. That is probably the



why as soon as the movement was withdrawn this unity broke down and instead of Hindu-Muslim fraternization the country had to witness a resurgence of the aggressively communal Tabligh and Shuddhi movements and, finally, Hindu-Muslim riots.

In contradistinction to all these three movements, the left from its birth raised essentially secular slogans and tried to build the unity of the people not as the unity of Hindus and Muslims, but as the unity of workers and peasants, middle classes and capitalists and so on. The secularism of the left was superior to the secularism of other political trends because it was based on the primacy of the economic factor, not merely on respect for all religions. The left put all its emphasis on the class struggle, which by its nature is secular. It tried to organise the masses into trade unions and kisan sabhas where again people united not as Hindus and Muslims but as workers and peasants. It did not seek people's solidarity in the basic unity of all religions but in the bonds forged by common conditions of life, including the exploitation of all workers, whether Hindus or Muslims, by the native and foreign capitalists, the oppression of peasants by the landlords and their imperialist masters, and the enslavement of the Indian people as a whole by the British.

## II

THE left was secular not only in its basic outlook, philosophy of life, and forms of agitation and organization, it was secular also in its programmatic slogans and its vision of the future India. It never dreamt of reviving the glories of the past which would have opened the doors to either Hindu or Muslim revivalism. It neither sought to establish Ram Rajya nor did it ever think of converting India into a Dar-ul-Harb. On the contrary, it either saw future India as an India of workers' and peasants' soviets or raised the slogan of a Constituent Assembly through which the people would decide the shape and structure of the future Indian State.

Between 1920 and 1947 the left could not acquire the leadership of the national movement. But it won over most of the terrorist revolutionaries and a large number of Gandhian political workers to its class-struggle-oriented secular mass politics. It was able to build up large and powerful class organisations of the toilers—workers, peasants and middle class employees—as well as students. It was under the direct impact of the left that the national movement worked out an economic programme designed to appeal to the masses cutting across differences of religion and caste.

At a time when the Muslim youth was increasingly coming under the influence of the communal policies of the Muslim League, the left was also able to draw a large number of Muslim young men into the mainstream of the national movement and it helped them to become effective mass agitators and mass organisers. In several areas where the toiling masses had been left largely untouched by the national movement, and where they had therefore fallen victim to communal politics, it was the left which carried the message of

secular anti-imperialism and secular class-struggle. Great Tebhaga Movement of the East Bengal peasantry, the Hari peasant movement of Sind and the vigorous trade union movement of West Punjab were in the contribution of the left.

These successes were, however, marginal in significance and by and large the Muslim masses remained prisoners of communalism. In a desperate bid to reach them, a section of the left committed the mistake of actually pandering to Muslim communalism which supported the demand for Pakistan and declared Muslim League the national organization of the Muslims. But this did not mean that the left surrendered to communalism. This became apparent during the communal riots which accompanied the partition of the country when the communists, Gandhians and the Nehruites were in the forefront of the grim struggle against riotmongers. The present generation may not know the name of Lal Mohan but those who were politically aware and active in the movement cherish the memory of that great revolutionary who sacrificed his life for the protection of the minorities in Noakhali.

The left played a significant part in the people's struggle against the Nizam in Hyderabad and against the Dogra Maharaja in Kashmir and thus helped in secularising the political life in two of the largest states where the danger of the people coming under the grip of communalism was always very great. However, neither the left nor the national movement as a whole, was able to prevent the partition of the country and migration of population. That was mainly due to their failure to rouse the Muslim peasantry of the north-western and north-eastern regions of the country to fight for freedom and democracy. That was the pre-dimension of our national movement appeared after 24 years when the peasants of Bangladesh rose in armed revolt against West Pakistani sub-colonialism and opened the way for a political reorganization of the sub-continent by liberating their country. It need not add that the left played a crucial part in bringing about this change and thus delivered the might yet prove a mortal blow at communalism.

## III

THE prolonged struggle by the left against Hindu communalism after independence is too well known to require elaborate re-telling. Its importance cannot be forgotten just because the left once suffered from an aberration in 1967-68 and joined hands with communal groups for a brief period in search of a short-cut to political power. What has much greater significance is the fact that when the greatest threat to our secular democracy appeared in the form of the Grand Alliance, the Congress was defeated only by itself turning left.

Since then the political battle lines have been drawn much clearer than before. The secular, democratic, and rightist forces, are mustering in opposite camps. A situation is developing in which one who cherishes secularism and democracy will have to choose between left and one who is radical in economic matters but not on the issue of secularism will find himself in company of utter reactionaries.

SECULAR DEMOCRACY



# SECULARISATION OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

*A Study in Muslim Attitudes*

MOIN SHAKIR  
AND  
S.H. MAGRABI

## I

Secularism, like democracy and socialism, has been accepted as one of the basic principles of Indian polity after 1947. One of the criteria of the working of this concept is to examine the socio-political behaviour of the various segments of Indian population. The electoral behaviour of the people provides a good scope for such a study. Under the purview of this pattern one can determine the extent of success in the operation of this principle in Indian life. In the present paper an attempt is made to examine the impact of secularism on Indian Muslims, and how their political behaviour is getting de-communalised under its impact. It is in a sense a brief account of the process of secularisation of their politics.

It should be noted here that there is no agreed and precise meaning of secularism in our country. It is also true that our secularism is neither entirely Indian nor Western in temper. In the West, secularism is a climax of the movements of Renaissance and Reformation, development of science, advancement of knowledge and the emergence of the philosophy of liberal democracy. The term secularism came to signify "an impassable wall" between Church and State, indicating the importance of human reason in political affairs. Religion was discarded as the basis of legal affairs of the State. Theocracy became "repellent to the political consciousness of modern nation". The modern state is considered as a "human constitutional arrangement".

Secularism in our country did not evolve on Western lines; nor can it be described as a forced one. Indian secularism can be described as the mixture of certain aspects of Indian tradition and Western notion of the secular state. In almost all the non-Western developing countries the process of modernisation has revealed that secularism is not a distinctively Western concept but has become a universal trend. The principle of social progress

independent of religion or religious considerations is generally accepted and followed.

## II

In India various interpretations of secularism and secularisation of cultural attitudes are offered. M.N. Roy stood for doing away with religion, while Gandhi advocated equality of all religions and the State having no religion. The Gandhian notion of secularism finds full expression in the Indian Constitution. K.M. Panikkar rightly observed that Indian secularism postulates that political institutions must be based on the economic and social interests of the entire community without reference to religion, race or sect; secondly, it eliminates from the body politic all ideas of division between individuals and groups on the basis of their faith or racial origins; thirdly, it is obvious that composite secular State must accept as the basis of its policies what Aristotle termed 'distributive justice' that all communities must share the power as they must share the duties and responsibilities of being citizens.

The view of secularism incorporated in our Constitution cannot be described as anti-religious. In the context of Islam the liberal interpreters found no conflict with such a view of polity. They held that Islam like all other religions lays down certain moral and ethical norms and it is quite different from prescribing a social system. The polity and social system have nothing to do with Islam as religion. The fundamentalist interpreters of Islam believed that secularism is the concomitant of the modern Western culture containing germs of atheistic materialism which is the greatest danger to humanity. Acceptance of secularism, they argued, tantamounts to undermining the basic ethics of Islam which is the liberator and emancipator of mankind.

After Independence, the Indian Muslims consciously or unconsciously became the inheritors of the fundamentalist legacy. The sense of being a minority surrounded by an overwhelming majority of non-Muslims and the constant challenge of change inevitable in a democratic set up compelled them to cling to the concept of medieval religion which provides a defensive mechanism. Very soon they realized the force of the living realities which were more powerful than the instinctive desire to work within the framework of religion. Under such compulsions they could not reject the principles of democratic politics and secularism, some of their leaders desired. The partition of the country was a blessing in disguise for the common Muslims. It released the forces of social modernisation. The Pakistani Movement had continuously ignored the real problems of the Muslim community. Its leaders never cared for social reforms, economic upliftment and cultural advancement of the Muslim. After 1947, customs like Purdah began to decline and education among the Muslim women rapidly increased. The employment of the Muslim women in various fields remained no more a taboo. In the political affairs they realised that the traditional categories of the rulers or the ruled had become irrelevant. It implies integration—breaking up of the communal identities and consequent emergence of the Indian identity.

In the absence of the data on the various aspects



of Muslim life, it is difficult to substantiate that the of the orthodox religion has considerably loosened. The limited data about the electoral behaviour and voting pattern of the Muslim community that we have presently indicates that the process of secularisation is slow. An attempt is made here to analyse that.

In the competitive federal democratic polity the Muslims needed to break away from the pre-partition political strategies. After the establishment of Pakistan, Muslim League leaders had left India. The Muslim League had ceased to be an All-India Party. - It was reduced to the position of a small regional party in the north. The Indian Muslims, therefore, chose to support the Indian National Congress; the common Muslim had faith in the secular leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. They believed that the Congress would give them security and protect their interest. This itself gave an impetus to the slow process of secularising the Muslim attitude. Its implications were far-reaching.

Unfortunately the Congress failed to act upto their expectations. The incidents of communal violence and indifference of the government to solve some of the genuine problems, compelled them to revise their stand. It gave birth to frustration and resort to communal politics. The Muslim leaders who had a vested interest in Muslim communalism fully exploited the situation. At the robust common sense of the community never let them down. They drifted from Congress and supported other secular opposition parties like CPI, Socialist Party and Swatantra although the opposition in the latter later showed, disappointed them.

### III

A careful analysis of the voting pattern of the Muslim community clearly shows that it is not a monolithic entity. There is no single, political, communal aspiration, there is no *en bloc* voting. The regional diversification and ideological considerations do constitute the ingredients of the political behaviour. Paul Brass conducted a survey of the voting behaviour in Kanpur in 1962. According to him the formula of the Muslim voting behaviour is that if the Congress alone puts up a Muslim candidate, Muslims will vote for the Congress; if a leftist party alone puts up a Muslim candidate then the Muslims will vote for the Muslim; if both the Congress and the Leftist parties put up Muslim candidates then the Muslim vote will be split; finally, if there is no Muslim candidate at all, Muslims will vote for Leftists. The implication of the formula is that the Muslims have a tendency both for block voting for the candidates of the community and for Leftist candidates, generally, in almost equal proportion.<sup>2</sup>

This should be viewed against traditional anti-Congressism which is connected with the memories of the communal strifes in that region. On the whole, the Muslims' identification with secular organisations has been considerably strong. In 1967 a study conducted by the Centre for the Study of the Developing Societies shows that out of a national sample of 20 Muslim male electors 46.8 per cent voted for the Congress and 39.7 per cent for the opposition. The study further shows that 39 per cent the Congress Muslims showed strong preference for the party, while

11.4 per cent had only a weak preference for it. In an election in which the Congress party did not do very well, getting only 47 per cent of the votes polled in the country, the support it received from the Muslim electorate was not small, especially in the context of the determined opposition mounted against it by several leaders of Muslim opinion.<sup>3</sup>

The Mid-term Election of 1971 gives better picture of the trends emerging in the Muslim electorate. The Fourth Lok Sabha was dissolved on December 27, 1970. The Prime Minister in her broadcast (Dec. 27, 1970) declared that the Lok Sabha had to be dissolved, fourteen months before the completion of the full term, owing to the inability of the government to go ahead with its proclaimed programmes for the establishment of a just social order. It was also pointed out that the eradication of backwardness and poverty and the attainment of the socio-economic justice remains yet a distant goal to be fought for and achieved. This necessitated a fresh mandate from the people. The Prime Minister however, did not refer to any of the minorities and their problems in her broadcast, but in the first press conference after that (Dec. 30, 1970) Mrs. Gandhi indicated that the genuine grievances of the Muslim community should be redressed. Urdu should be given its due place in the North, and some changes should be made in the status of the Aligarh University which are in keeping with the times and in the interest of the community. She did not favour any alliance with the Muslim League.

With the emergence of the Grand Alliance consisting of Congress(O), SSP, Swatantra and Jana Sangh, the Muslim voters were left to choose between the Congress (R) and the Grand Alliance. The Muslim interest in the mid-term Polls was obvious. What was crucial for them was not the attitude of the Prime Minister towards some of their problems but her courageous and bold stand in the Lok Sabha on the riots of Bhiwandi and Jalgaon. Moreover, the Muslims considered Mrs. Gandhi and her party as a symbol of secularism and stability wherein lay their security, physical as well as cultural. The situation in 1971 was different from that in 1967. The Grand Alliance signified the reactionary forces and the other progressive parties were in disarray. The Muslims, therefore, were keen to assert their strength in favour of the Congress. The common Muslim shared the view of Dr. Syed Mahmud that every single vote not cast in Prime Minister's favour is the vote for the poverty and the weakness of our country, to the detriment of the minorities, especially for the Muslims, and against the interest of the Muslim countries.<sup>4</sup>

It will be certainly wrong to think that the entire Muslim leadership agreed to support the Congress(R). The Jamaat-e-Islami oriented Muslim stance was that Mrs. Gandhi's approach was political out and out. She was not really interested in the Muslim problems and purposely kept the Aligarh issue in abeyance, simply expressed pious hopes regarding Urdu and was studiously silent on the question of Muslim Personal Law. The alternative suggested was that all the Muslim organisations should come together and consolidate their electoral strength by mutual adjustments and understanding. They should forge a united front with other



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pressed minorities and classes of the nation. If this did not materialise, the Muslims were advised by the Jamaat-e-Islami President to refrain from voting. However, some of the Muslim organisations like the Muslim League in the South and the Muslim Majlis in U.P. and the Awami Tanzeem in Bihar decided to support the Congress(R). This support was understood as vitally linked with the question of the existence of the minorities and the survival of their culture.

The Muslim voting pattern in 1971 Elections is significant in more than one senses. First, the consensus of the Muslim community, by and large, has been in favour of a committed secular democratic party. The Muslim leaders belonging to other political parties did feel decidedly uncomfortable in the company of Jana Sangh. The resignations of Mr. Mohd. Ali in Mysore and Mr. Adam Adil in Maharashtra should be appreciated in this background. The case of Mr. M.J. Imam of the Swatantra Party can also be instanced here. That solid Muslim support was one of the factors for the Congress victory is admitted even by Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Secondly, it showed a deliberate political preference of the community to non-communalism. The principle of en bloc voting on communal grounds has been given up. The Muslim identification with the regional matters was stamped with a secular spirit. In Bengal they voted according to their political opinion for the CPM or the CPI-Congress Alliance. In U.P. even without the Muslim Majlis they would have voted to the Congress(R). The same could be said about other regions where the Muslim votes were of crucial value. Thirdly those who advocated the boycott of the Election in the Muslim community did not cut much ice. They proved to be ineffective which shows the political maturity and the progressive perception of realities on the part of Muslim voters. One feels that this was mainly because the ruling Congress leadership for the first time decided to approach directly the Muslim voters and not through the Muslim leaders.

#### IV

In 1971 a study of the political attitudes of the various communities was conducted in the Aurangabad Parliamentary Constituency.<sup>5</sup> The survey shows that 83 per cent of the Muslims voted for the Congress and none has voted for any other party. (See Table No. 1).

TABLE 1  
Respondents' Community & Voting Pattern  
(Percentage)

Community	Cong.	Jana Sangh	RPI.	Ind.	did not vote
Muslims	83	—	—	—	17
Non-Muslims	88	5.5	2.7	—	3.8

Tables 2 to 5 indicate Muslim attitude towards the national problems like the nationalisation of banks, ceiling on urban property, towards socialist pattern of society, the abolition of Privy Purses. Not less than eighty five per cent of voters favoured the progressive moves. Table No. 6 shows that 74.6 per cent Muslim voters are satisfied with the secular character of the Government.

TABLE 2  
Attitude Towards Nationalisation of Bank  
(Percentage)

	Urban Area		Rural Area
	Non-Muslims	Muslims	
Right	77.665	96.31	77
Wrong	9.000	0.52	2
Unspecific	13.335	3.17	2
Did not understand	—	—	19

TABLE 3  
Attitude Towards Abolition of Privy Purses  
(Percentage)

	Urban Area		Rural Area
	Non-Muslims	Muslims	
Right	75	89.46	63.5
Wrong	10	7.4	7.93
Unspecific	15	3.14	9.07
Does not understand	—	—	19.07

TABLE 4  
Attitude Towards Ceiling on Urban Property  
(Percentage)

	Urban Area		Rural Area
	Non-Muslims	Muslims	
In favour	81.14	85.71	85.88
Not in favour	12.26	11.11	4.7
Unspecified	6.06	3.18	9.5

TABLE 5  
Attitude Towards Socialist Pattern of Society  
(Percentage)

	Urban Area		Rural Area
	Non-Muslims	Muslims	
In favour	91.05	86.84	87.04
Not in favour	3.06	7.94	6.03
Unspecific	4.09	5.22	1.06
Do not know	—	—	4.07

TABLE 6  
Secular Character of Government  
(Percentage)

	Urban Area		Rural Area
	Non-Muslims	Muslims	
Satisfied	69.33	74.06	73.08
Not satisfied	23.00	22.23	17.44
Not specified	7.66	3.71	7.92
Do not know	—	—	—

Table No. 7 also shows that the Muslims believed that the secular parties would be helpful in solving problems. As regards resolving the Hindu-Muslim conflicts, 85.8 per cent favoured Congress while 6.0 per cent favoured Muslim League. As regards security, 82.3 per cent preferred Congress and 6.6 per cent favoured Muslim League. 82 per cent believed that the Congress



## V

could remove discrimination, 9 per cent favoured the Communists, 6 per cent Socialists, 2.1 per cent Swatantra and 1.8 per cent Muslim League. In the same way, 7.7 per cent held that the Congress could bring about national unity, 2.1 per cent favoured Swatantra, 1.8 per cent Communists and 1.5 per cent Muslim League.

TABLE 7

**Respondents' Perception of Party which would Help in Solving Problems**

Political Party	Hindu-Muslim conflicts	Minority security respondents	Remove discrimination percentage	National Unity
Congress	85.06	82.03	82.00	90.07
Swatantra	2.01	1.08	2.01	2.01
Jana Sangh	—	—	—	—
Communist	2.01	3.03	9.00	1.08
Socialist	N2	—	—	—
Muslim League	6.00	6.06	1.08	1.05
N.R.	4.02	6.00	4.05	3.09
			N=323	

(Source: C.P. Bhambri & P.S. Verma: *Indian Journal of Political Science*—April-June 1972, p. 182.)

In the 1972 Assembly elections the Muslim representation in various State Assemblies considerably increased. The political fragmentation has also been prominently evident. In all, 877 Muslim candidates contested the elections—404 were independents while the rest of the candidates were sponsored by the Congress(R), Congress(O), Socialist Party, C.P.I., C.P.I.-M, Swatantra, Muslim League, Jamaat-e-Islami, Jana Sangh, Socialist Unity Centre, R.S.P., Forward Block, R.P.I., Shoshit Dal, Manipur People's Party, B.K.D., Akali Dal and P.W.P. Out of 877 candidates, 203 won. Gopal Krishna, commenting on the results, says that, "If these results are any guide to the political preferences of the Muslim electorate we could conclude that the Muslim electorate, by and large, supports the Congress(R) and the secular parties. That this electorate is heavily penetrated by secular forces is now beyond question."

"The competitive politics and the process of modernisation have inevitably begun to create a differentiated political opinion. To this process the Muslim sectarians made an unwilling contribution during the 1972 Elections. In an endeavour to defeat the Congress they advised the Muslims to vote for the opposition parties including the Jana Sangh. How far this appeal succeeded one does not know but there have been reports of the Muslims voting for the Socialist Party, the Congress(O) and the Jana Sangh in large numbers in Bihar. In West Bengal a large number of Muslims have voted for the CPI-M and CPI. This political fragmentation of the Muslim electorate is perhaps even more important from the point of view of secularisation of Indian politics than the obvious defeat of the Muslim League and its allies.....for those committed to the secularisation of the Indian politics and the integration of the Muslims within the broad framework of a democratic secular political society, the 1972 Election results hold promise."

THE foregoing discussion about the secularisation of Muslim political behaviour demonstrates that the common voters' attitude is certainly secular. He is guided more by the socio-economic considerations than any other religious ones. Nevertheless, one should not carry the impression that the goal of secularism has been achieved. The obstacles are many. They have to be removed in order to have a committed secular national polity. A comparative perspective regarding the development of secularism in other groups of society and a meticulous analysis of the socio-economic progress in the context of the regions and communities is urgently called for. A probe into the existing gap between the voter and the electorate is also necessary. The class composition of the Muslim elite and the working of the Muslim organisations appears to be one of the obstacles to the secularisation and the modernisation of the community.

The present Muslim political elite still carries the burden of the past on its shoulders. The reactionary heritage still haunts it. Religion provides a frame of reference, cultural content and political language to it. The net outcome is the resistance to accept the challenge of modernisation. Another reason is its inability to comprehend the realities of the situation created by the Partition. It has failed to realise that communal solidarity has no positive role to play in a developing society. The national integration in India should not be looked upon as the strength and unity of the religious communities along communal lines but transcending and rejecting communal divisions. One wonders why the Muslim political organisations should be so much tainted by religion? Why the overtones of their policies should be separatist and revivalist? Why every communal riot reminds them of the forgotten lesson of the unity of the Millat? Why Muslim elite should envisage a Civil War between caste Hindu and the rest of the population and also the defeat of the Caste Hindus solving the communal problem of the country?

What one expects from the Muslim community is the rejection of this leadership and the cultivation of faith in non-Muslim leadership which can effectively protect their interest. Secondly, the political parties which should become the instruments of secularisation are creating obstacles in its way. They could play an important role in secularising the Muslim behaviour. The irony of situation is that parties who enjoy political support have not mobilised them on secular issues. If the secular parties continue to be as lackadaisical in this sphere as they are at present, it is the Muslims who would fail secularism and not the Muslims.<sup>7</sup>

It is true that the party system have not proved to be helpful in establishing secularism. They have failed to overcome primordial loyalties and the religiousness of the people. The non-secular approach establishes quick communication with the masses. Appeal to religion, caste and community helps them to operate effectively, although contrary to the principle of secularism which demands much hard work on the political level. Selection of the candidate at the time of the election, rousing par-



chial feelings and canvassing on communal lines pays rich dividends. Consequently communal identities get strengthened and political ideology becomes irrelevant in determining the political behaviour.<sup>8</sup>

## VI

It is unfortunate that there is a difficulty of making a distinction between a party, caste or community in India. In many states a particular caste or party or community are almost synonymous. In Maharashtra Congress is identified with the Maratha caste and the Jana Sangh with the Brahmin caste. In U.P. the Brahmins dominate the Congress, Shias dominate the C.P.I., the Jats dominate the BKD and the Sunnis dominate the Muslim Majlis and the C.P.I.-M.<sup>9</sup> All these factors should be taken into account while dealing with the inter-action between secularisation and the party and the electoral system. (Table No. 8 and No. 9 describe the distribution of Muslim candidates from different parties).

C.P. Bhambri and P.S. Verma in their study of Muslim voting pattern raised a very pertinent point. They observed that the parties which stand for secu-

larism in Indian public life may integrate the minority community in the national mainstream, and the parties which identify themselves with religion may alienate the minorities and keep them as separate and exclusive social groups. The Indian Muslims have shown in their past behaviour in the present century that they can be influenced by the separatist and nationalist integrationist movements. Hence if secular parties are strong and effective in Indian politics, there seems to be no probability of any exclusivist and separatist movement developing in the Muslim community.<sup>10</sup>

Lastly, the genuine problems of the Muslims should urgently be taken up by the Government and the other political parties. The indifference towards their problems makes them think in terms of Pressure Group and Communal Political Organisations.<sup>11</sup> The strategy of the Majlis-e-Mushawarat was basically an exercise in non-secular politics. The problems of Urdu Textbooks which agitate the Muslim mind are the concern of the entire nation. It is the question of the defence of democracy. It calls for a movement on the part of democratic forces. Unless this is done secularism will not become a habit and a value.

TABLE 8  
Distribution of Muslim Candidates Contested and Elected from Different Parties in Different Parliamentary Elections

Party/TA	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971
INC	1 (17)	27(17)	27(17)	31(14)	25(21)*
COM.	1(—)	7(1)	10(1)	CPI 6(2) CPI(M) 1(1)	15(—) <sup>a</sup> 5(1) 2(—)
SWA	—	—	11(—)	15(3)	2(—)
PSP	—	8(2)	10(—)	11(1)	5(—)
SSP	—	—	13(—)	4(1)	5(—)
SOC.	6(1)	—	7(—)	1(1)	—
MM	—	—	—	—	4(—)
JS	—	—	—	—	1(—)
M.L.	—	—	4(2) <sup>b</sup>	2(2) <sup>b</sup>	6(3) <sup>c</sup>
Regional Parties, others	5(—)	4(1) <sup>d</sup>	13(1) <sup>e</sup>	9(2) <sup>d</sup>	18(1) <sup>d</sup>
IND.	7(—)	15(—)	35(1)	55(3)	118(3)

Notes : x (x) : Muslim Candidates Contested (Muslim Candidates won).

a : After a Split in INC., Cong (O) put 15 Candidates but none was Elected.

b : The Muslim Candidate Elected for M.L. from Kerala State, Madras.

c : Muslim League Candidate, one was Elected from Madras, two were Elected from Kerala.

d : The Elected Candidate was from Regional Party.

e : No Candidate from Regional Party.

TABLE 9  
Distribution of Muslim Candidates Elected/Contested

Number of Constituencies from where Muslim Candidates Contested the Following Parliamentary Elections

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971
No. of Candidates Elected	18	21	22	29	29
No. of Candidates Contested	37	61	130	135	191
No. of Constituencies	29	51	96	92	118

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SECULAR DEMOCRACY



# NEHRU APPROACH TO SECULARISM

D.R. GOYAL

## I

sharp criticism provoked among the orthodox secularists and the fanatical anti-secularists gives a measure of the contribution Jawaharlal Nehru made to secularist thinking and to the process of secularising Indian politics. The former have seen in this a compromise responsible for slowing down the process and the continuation of the communal struggle. The deference he showed to Gandhi who in every inch a religious man, the emotional aura around his references and descriptions of India's rivers and mountains, the reverence for spirituality and ritual experiences, his approval for certain traditional ceremonies on births and deaths of his near and dear ones, his not leaving behind instructions for cremation of his dead body to the electric crematorium, his making room for a traditional Hindu cremation, his repeated insistence on the interrelationship of means and ends have been commented upon with varying degrees of severity and cynicism.

On the other hand, the anti-secularists have persistently attacked him for being an anti-religion secularist. The Hindu Mahasabha, the Jana Sangh and the RSS have found him culpable for refusing to be pressurised into imposing a ban on cow-slaughter, for favouring social legislation in supposed disregard of the dictates of scriptures, for not making religion a basis of citizenship, for not declaring Sanskrit the official language, for not participating in religious ceremonies like the restoration of Somnath temple and performance of Ashtagraha Yajna and, above all, for his vigorous condemnation of communal riots. The counterparts of these organisations among Muslims have been no less critical. Significantly, the Jamaat-ul-Millat, at least in the early years of freedom, expressed unhappiness exactly over the same postures which the RSS found uncomfortable. Over the years they, and others of the ilk, have held Nehru and his secularism responsible for the moral degradation the manifestations of which at times appear in the public life of the country. Stretching their queer logic they have even laid the blame for communal violence, injustice to Urdu, proportionally, smaller number of Muslims in services and legislatures, and the economic backwardness of the community at the door of Nehruvian secularism. The burden of their criticism is that the polity was not dictated by considerations of after-life.

It is as it should be. One who declares "I prefer the open sea with all its storms and tempests" would

not relish anything else more than the squirming and smarting of those whose shackles he was breaking. Nehru fought for the freedom of the country and of the mind. Like Tagore he wanted his country to wake into 'that heaven of freedom'

*"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high  
Where knowledge is free;  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments  
by narrow domestic walls;  
Where words come out from the depth of truth  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into  
the dreary desert sand of dead habit."*

It is important to recall these lines when thinking of Nehru in relation to secularism, or any other concept for that matter. He took life realistically, tried to understand its dynamics and evolved his practice in the interest of human progress and welfare. In all this he refused to be hemmed in by any set theories though he was prepared to learn from any if it was helpful in promoting the goal. Of course he had his human failings and in many ways he fell short of his own ideals. But while assessing or evaluating his contribution in any field the pitfall to measure him by dogmatic yardsticks should be avoided.

## II

"No word perhaps in any language is more likely to be interpreted in different ways by different people as the word 'religion' (or the corresponding words in other languages). Probably to no two persons will the same complex of ideas and images arise on hearing this word", wrote Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Autobiography*.

That being the case secularism which is a concept evolved in relation to religion can also not have the same connotation for all. In the European context of a long-drawn conflict between Church and State the concept of secularism implied a rejection of religion. Those described above as orthodox secularists were and are people who seek to foist the results of their experience on a people who had not gone through it. Hardly any Asian country, least of all India, had had a history of Church-State conflict. In the orient setting the counter-position was between dogmatism and rational thought. And it is this that Nehru emphasised. He was at pains to clarify that dogma did not represent the real spirit of religion. He never indulged in the somewhat facile generalisation about separating religion from politics. He quotes Gandhi's dictum on the subject: "My devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can do so without the slightest hesitation. I am convinced that those who say that religion is separate from politics do not know what religion means." He adds: "Perhaps it would have been better if he had said that most of these people who want to exclude religion from life and politics mean by the word something very different from what he (Gandhi) means."

For Gandhi truth and religion were synonymous and devotion to them did not mean escape from

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but dedication to make it better. This kind of religion was not rejected by him. He was rather prepared to be "a humble camp-follower" of "the Grand Army of the religious Soul" if it was conceived in terms of Romain Rolland who is quoted reverentially in the *Autobiography*: "It is the quality of thought and not its object which determines its source and allows us to decide, whether or not it emanates from religion. If it turns fearlessly towards the search for truth at all costs with single-minded sincerity prepared for any sacrifice, I should call it religious; for it presupposes faith in an end to human effort higher than the life of existing society, and even higher than the life of humanity as a whole. Scepticism itself, when it proceeds from vigorous natures true to the core, when it is an expression of strength and not of weakness, joins in the march of the Grand Army of the religious Soul". He also approves of religion if it is, as Prof. John Dewey defines "Whatever introduces genuine perspective into the piecemeal and shifting episodes of existence" or "any activity pursued on behalf of an ideal and against obstacles, and in spite of threats of personal loss, because of conviction of its general and enduring value".

He was all for religiosity which was the motive force behind action for social good and, like Romain Rolland, he included in it the Socialists, the Communists, the Humanitarians, Nationalists and even Rationalists. It was not to be an escape from the complexities of life, not "a safe anchorage from doubt and mental conflict", nor was it to be "an asocial quest for God or the Absolute". He abhorred the "usual religious outlook" which "is based not only on the acceptance without demur of certain fixed and unalterable theories and dogmas, but also on sentiment and emotion and passion." That "shuts its eyes to reality lest reality may not fit in with preconceived notions" and "often allows itself to be exploited by self-seekers and opportunists." The moral standards of organised religion are also divorced from social needs, for they are "based on a highly metaphysical doctrine of sin."

In the context of history Nehru recognised the valuable contribution of religion in pointing out "principles for the guidance of human life." But what irritated him was that religion tried "to imprison truth in set forms and dogmas, and encouraged ceremonials and practices which soon lose all their original meaning and become mere routine". This duality of religion has been succinctly summed up in the *Discovery of India*: 'Religion, though it has undoubtedly brought comfort to innumerable human beings and stabilised society by its values, has checked the tendency to change and progress inherent in human society.'

"Change and progress" as he thought "was inherent in human society"; religion was expected to be responsive to their demands and needs. The 'ultimate reality' which is often talked of by religious leaders as 'eternal, imperishable, unchanging', Nehru thought, "cannot be apprehended in its fullness by the mind of man". Human comprehension was by "the state of development of that mind"

and by "the prevailing ideology of the period". Religion as understood by man is only a partial truth and to be completed by continuous seeking, renewing, reshaping and developing.

When understood as "the inner development of the individual, the evolution of his consciousness in a certain direction which is considered good" religion again has limitations. Nehru did not believe that social or outward changes were merely "a projection of the inner development". He derided the fashion of taking pride in superiority of oriental spiritualism over materialism of the Occident as "one of the delusions with which we try to comfort ourselves and try to overcome our feeling of inferiority". Nehru's approach was dialectical and he thought in terms of continuing interaction between 'inner development' and 'outer environment', each influencing the other. He however was of opinion that whereas the former could claim a superior role in the case of an exceptional individual, in the case of groups and societies as well as of ordinary individuals the latter plays a more dominating part. In his *Autobiography* he states unambiguously: "A man who is the victim of economic circumstances, and who is hedged and restricted by the struggle to live, can very rarely achieve inner consciousness of a very high degree. A class that is downtrodden and exploited can never progress inwardly. A nation which is politically and economically subject to another and hedged and circumscribed and exploited can never achieve inner growth." And he concludes that "even for inner development external freedom and suitable environment become necessary."

This elaborate discussion on Nehru's attitude to religion has been necessitated to steer clear of both the orthodox secularist and fanatically anti-secularist distortions of his views. It also helps to understand the lust for social action that dominated his life. Not that Nehru tried to mould his life in accordance with any set understanding of life and religion; that was the man we find both in thought and action. It will also help us to understand what he insisted on and tried to do. In the first place he insisted on not escaping into a world of thought and imagination. "Thought" he said, "in order to justify itself must lead to action". And this action must be directed to alleviate the unhappiness of others, "to remove every tear from every eye" as he put it in his 'Tryst with Destiny' speech.

It may not also be wide of the mark to say that Nehru's devotion to freedom and socialism emanated from a soul and spirit which is essentially religious in the best sense of the word.

### III

Nehru's secularism was not opposed to spiritualism and to religion understood in that sense. There can be a semantic discussion whether we call it by that name or not, but more important than that is the fact that what we call the secular spirit of Indian constitution is exactly what Nehru believed in. Probably to avoid any dispute over the term Nehru showed reluctance to use the word in the constitution although



with its emphasis on the sovereignty of people its approach was fundamentally secular.

In his survey of world's history Nehru had witnessed religion, as commonly understood, providing sheet anchor to the reactionary forces and obstructing the forward march of the people. What he saw happening before him in politics in the name of religion confirmed his view. In India the reactionary aspect of religion took the form of communalism. What Nehru opposed was not religion in its spiritual sense but its travesty that took the form of communalism. What the Indian people needed was freedom from alien rule to be able to fight their social and economic backwardness. The communalists, talking in the name of religion and culture, never bothered to lend a hand in that struggle; they only put difficulties in the way, thus dividing the people. Their aspirations and strategies had no relationship with what could be the aspiration of the masses but were out to serve the interests of feudal landlord or banker classes. Even when a communal party got mass response because the latter were being exploited the policy framework remained as it was.

The struggle for freedom particularly with the dynamism infused into it by the mass-oriented politics of Gandhi, was forging an unprecedented unity of the Indian people. This mass of humanity was fast developing a national consciousness. Into this milieu came the declarations of Jinnah, Savarkar, and Parmanand enticing people away from it towards the sound and dry of communal politics. Savarkar came up with his wary-Hinduise politics and militarise Hindudom. He asserted in his book *'Hindutva'* that Hindus alone constitute the Indian Nation because "Hindus alone possess a common *Rashtra*, a common *Sanskriti* and accept India not only as motherland and fatherland but also their holy land i.e., *Punya Bhumi*". This line of thought formed the basis of the ideology of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. The leader of the latter organisation, M.S. Golwalkar, elaborated it further in his book *'We or our Nationhood Defined'* published in 1939. He wrote that "non-Hindu peoples in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture i.e., they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its age-long traditions but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead, in one word, they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment—not even citizens' right." The counter-strain to this chorus was provided by Mohammed Ali Jinnah who in 1940 observed: "It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. They are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders, and it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality and this misconception of one Indian nation has gone far beyond the limits and is the cause of most of your troubles and will lead India to destruction if we fail to revise our notions in time".

Nehru condemned these attempts at religious interpretation of culture and nation observing that such talk "means that there is no nation at all but a religious bond; it means that modern civilisation should be discarded and we should go back to the medieval ways; it means either autocratic government or a foreign government; it means, finally, just nothing at all except an emotional state of mind and a conscious unconscious desire not to face realities, especially economic realities".

The communal leaders were all the time arguing and quarrelling with one another to win favour of alien rulers and never thought in terms of throwing away the yoke. They talked of Hindu and Muslim nations and cultures but never bothered about hunger and misery that was the fate of the workers and peasants of either community. The demands that they put forward invariably constituted list of concessions that feudal and upper classes of each community wanted from the British whether in the form of representations or reservations. Their perspective was based on the continued British rule over India. Nehru carried on a political campaign against these forces. His effort was only a partial success in the sense he was not able to mobilise sufficient strength to prevent Partition but was able to save India from falling into the death-trap of declaring itself a Hindu country and exchange of population on the basis of religion despite strong pressures after Partition.

#### IV

THE forces of communalism worked as the instrument of British policy of divide and rule. Nehru, ever, was not content, like many of his colleagues, blaming the British for communal discord and trouble. He was more inclined to understand and eradicate reasons within which the outsiders were able to exploit for this purpose.

The efforts at unity before him can be placed in two categories. One was the attempt to adjust communal demands through various pacts spelling the positions of various communities in a free India. All such attempts were frustrated because this of give-and-take the British could always disrupt by a higher and surer bid. The other was the Gandhian method of solving the problem 'by goodwill and friendship of the majority group'. Gandhi, as Nehru, wanted to win over the Muslims and bargain with them.

In all these attempts the role of the masses was more or less nil. In all the bargaining the elite two communities alone were in the picture. Nehru condemned them as 'methods of the market place' and recommended radicalisation of politics. He wanted to change the entire framework of the whole nation. It is a pity that Congress did not give him the necessary response. Today when the Congress has got the Nehruite moorings it has to decide whether radical politics and not 'methods of the market place' will be used to solve the communal problem which is still very much with us.



# THE IDEOLOGY THAT FAILED

*Conclusion*

AN OBSERVER

It may be unfair to go to the extent of saying that the whole idea of a Pakistani nation is a mere fragment of imagination and the whole concept of the Muslim nation of the sub-continent was a gigantic hoax perpetrated by an ultra-clever Bombay lawyer for personal glorification. Whereas Pakistani nation is an undeniable reality, the concept of the Muslim nation of the sub-continent is debatable. More than the Indian intellectuals, their Pakistani counter-parts are contesting it. The fact of leaving forty million Muslims of the sub-continent out of the geographical borders of the Muslim State alone is enough to explode the concept. The concept of the Muslim nation was used by Mr. Jinnah as a political weapon and not as an ideology. He is on record to have said on August 10, 1947—"Now that Pakistan has been established, let us know that a day will soon come when Hindus will forget that they were Hindus and Muslims will forget that they were Muslims, and politically and nationally we would be one." Mr. Jinnah's concept of Pakistani nation did not exclude the Hindus. It proves beyond doubt that the two-nation theory was Mr. Jinnah's political weapon and not his ideology. Yet certain elements led by Maulana Maudoodi are at pains to prove that they are the true successors of the Qaid-e-Azam. Supported by the obscurantist press they are claiming to be the real champions of Pakistan not only in the present but also in the past, not merely of the fact but also of the original concept. Despite the fact that Maulana Maudoodi in his book about Jamaat-e-Islami has attempted to prove Pakistan movement as anti-Islam, he is being paraded as the originator of the concept of Pakistan. The Maudoodite love of ideology is exposed threadbare by the supporters of New Pakistan.

## II

THE present debate in Pakistan is in fact a clash of two concepts — old and new. The Islam Pasands are trying hard to inject life into the mummy of the old concept so as to capture power. H.K. Burki, the political commentator of the *Pakistan Times* hits hard at the ideologues in his article, 'Forward from Theory'— "They (ideologues) just cannot afford to accept the fact that with the creation of Pakistan on August 14, 1947, a political process had been completed and another begun. For they have used the two-nation theory and empty slogans about ideology as rouge and mascara, and in their decline, where would they be without them? The two-nation has been dead for 25-years, then? The two-nation has been dead for 25-years, then? The two-nation will have to move ahead or else it will not manage at all. It is true that no nation, particularly a relatively new and battered one, can afford to live without a shared sentiment. But what we are dealing with here is a false emotion. The reality of our situation tells us that we no longer live in West Pakistan, but in Pakistan. This is so, because for two decades the air has been thick with fine slogans—unity, faith, discipline etc.—and the charlatans have mouthed holy theories and practised fraud after fraud on the people of Pakistan. Political adventurers are still trying to perpetrate the same old tricks, but the reality would persist".

After the withdrawal of troops the major issue of

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## I

PAKISTAN today is a victim not only of constitutional vacuum, but also of ideological vacuum. Political wisdom may help her leaders to fill up the constitutional vacuum, but it may not be possible for them to cure her of the pangs of the latter quite early. The creation of Pakistan brought to the history of mankind the unique example of making illusion the very foundation of a reality. Pakistani propagandists accuse India of non-acceptance of the reality of Pakistan. India did accept the illusion which has already cost Pakistan quite a lot. Her love of the illusion has deprived her half of her territory and more than half of her population. Even after this painful experience certain elements are desperately trying to perpetuate the obsession of ideology. The protagonists of ideological state do not care to realise that more than a hundred countries, big and small, exist on the basis of the combined will of the people and they are certainly much more stable than the ideological state of Pakistan. The fact is that Pakistan today is involved in the agonising search of her non-existent feet.

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mediate concern for the people of Pakistan is the issue of Pakistani POWs. But the ideologues are exploiting this concern to support their ideological purpose. In fact their love is for Pakistan that exists in the slogans and not for the one that actually lies on the ground. The attempts to revive the 'ideology of Pakistan' have become more intense in the recent years. Zano's reference to this aspect in his Political Diary, in the *Pakistan Times* is interesting as well as revealing—"The 'ideology of Pakistan' is a phrase which one comes across rarely in the two decades of Pakistan, and even more rarely in the period when the Pakistan movement was going on. At that time Maudoodi claimed that nationalism as such was repugnant to Islam. The 'ideology of Pakistan' concept was brought into use as a counter to the concept of Islamic socialism".

### III

Of the ideologues, Ziauddin Ahmed Suleri is the most vocal. Day in and day out his column, Men and Letters in the Urdu daily *'Nawa-e-Waqf'* outstretches in the 'ideology of Pakistan'. At present he is doing everything possible on earth to confuse public and this role he has been playing since his reappointment third time to take over as Senior Editor of the *Pakistan Times* in 1970. His tribute to the Jamaat-e-Islami reveals his mental alignment—"In creating Islamic milieu, the Jamaat has done a commendable piece of work. Perhaps it has the best organisation in the Province, and it has devoted itself to the creation of the atmosphere of pristine enthusiasm in which Pakistan was created". Earlier Mian Tufail Mohammad, the present Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami had wailed to him in his appeal of the 19th August, 1969 "I was shocked at the dismissal of Mr. Suleri. Since the time Mr. Suleri had assumed charge as Editor he was using his pen for Islam and ideology of Pakistan". Suleri's alignments with Maudoodi emerged after Ayub's decline. Otherwise the same Z.A. Suleri had been the ideology in support of Ayub and to denounce Maudoodi. In the introduction of his book, *Politicians of Ayub*, he wrote, "If Maudoodi, the leader of Jamaat-e-Islami, can now (1964) see so clearly that the Islamic State is the real climax of the Movement, is it reasonable to ask why could he not understand its purport before? His contradictory stand is bound to create the suspicion that his logic for the Islamic State cannot be so flawless... Theologians like Maudoodi do not sympathise with the Movement, much less participate in it".

In that book Z.A. Suleri eulogised the Field Marshal who twisted Islam and the Ideology to serve Ayubian Basic Democracy. The same Z.A. Suleri condemns Ayub in his article Anatomy of Self Destruction: "The foremost effect of the Ayub Regime was the split of the East and the West. When Ayub did usher in the constitution, it was a farce and a facade. The power was completely in the hands of an oligarchy. This was an attempt at the strangulation of politics which was tantamount to a crushing attack on the heart of Pakistani nationhood."

It is not intended here to discuss the bonafides of Z.A. Suleri, but it is certainly relevant to refer to his changing stands with changing times. His love of

ideology may be his bread and butter, but it has already cost and is likely to cost the people of Pakistan their life and blood. His pleadings for the ideology of Pakistan are extremely misleading and dangerous. He reduces a religious philosophy to geographical limits when he says, "Islam is co-terminous with the area inhabited by its followers. Muslims go to make Islam and the land of Muslims is the land of Islam". But his approach appears ostrich-like in view of the world-wide reaction of horror at the recent happenings in the Islamic State of Pakistan which ultimately resulted in the emergence of democratic secular Bangladesh.

For this he does not blame his illusory ideology which he is pushing down the throat of the people of existing Pakistan. On the contrary he conveniently accuses others, "There was a leadership which created a country out of nothing, there has been a leadership which lost the bigger chunk of the land almost without resistance." He finds it hard to confess, that the ideology has failed. Despite Suleri's obduracy, the echo of the failure does get reflected in his writings: "No nation has more grievously suffered from ignorance than us. There is no denying the fact that our national existence is in the throes of extreme danger. It may be too bad to have been situated in a country which is hinged upon an ideology instead of history like other countries, but if it is worthwhile to maintain it for no higher purpose than material benefits, we have got to be true to its origins. Bangladesh is a classic negation of the Pakistan Movement's central theme of Muslim nationhood. Bangladesh is a great triumph for India because it has not merely weakened Pakistan it has robbed it of its rationale and challenge."

The ideology of Pakistan, as stated above by Suleri has been shaken off its roots (Ideology or Perish: *Nawa-e-Waqf* 20.7.72) by the emergence of Bangladesh. As regards history, Pakistan has hardly any history to hinge upon, unless it chooses to relate it in terms of the history of the sub-continent. Inspired by the ideologists' attempts are afoot to draw up Pakistan history. The concept of Muslim nationhood has inspired some to start Pakistan's history with Mohd. Bin Qasim's invasion of Sind. Isn't it strange that the history of a land starts with an invasion by an alien? This unhealthy trend is forcefully met by the Sind leader, Mr. G.M. Syed who links the affinity of the sons of the soil with Raja Dahar, irrespective of the religious faith he had.

### IV

The ideologues in Pakistan do not realise that they are imparting a very unnatural slant to the thinking of the people of that country. The zealous love of ideology is prompting them to undo what has been knitted into the lives of the people through centuries. An artificial culture, an artificial history and an artificial way of life are being manufactured to evolve a distinct sense of national pride. These will meet the same fate which the artificial ideology met. The fact that many Pakistanis want the history and culture of Pakistan to take roots in the womb of centuries down to the Mohanjodaro period. And they are the people who are not in favour of disowning the bonds of the sub-continent.

People in India know and believe that Pakistan



a fact of history. No sane person here is thinking on the lines of undoing it, unless the people there decide that way. The ideologues are fond of instilling in the public mind the notion that the Indians have not sincerely accepted the existence of Pakistan. On the contrary the people of Pakistan themselves do not seem to accept the existence of Pakistan. Those Pakistanis who believe that Pakistan was created to enable Muslims of the sub-continent to live the Islamic way, indirectly mean to say that the Indian Muslims who are more in number than the total population of Pakistan are sub-standard Muslims. Such persons had similar views about the Bengali Muslims. Time has proved it otherwise. Speaking at Lyallpur the former World Court Judge, Chaudhri Zafarullah Khan has regretted the un-Islamic state of affairs in the Islamic State. "There is a great and serious contradiction in what we profess and what we do. We had demanded Pakistan to follow the Islamic principles of life. But in actual practice we did just the opposite. We have fallen in the eyes of the World Community". (*Nawa-e-Waqt*: 5.12.72).

The religious claims have been washed away by the torrents of time. The very binding factor does not exist as a noticeable force. The actual experience has justified Burki's stand that the ideology met its end twenty five years ago. But persons like Nurul Amin who himself is nothing more than a case of transplanting, keep on saying that "Pakistan's recent tragedy has resulted from lack of unity and lack of faith in Pakistan ideology." (*speech in Rawalpindi* 9.7.72).

The facts are too cruel for him to admit. Prof. Ghulam Azam, another transplanted politician in Pakistan, could get the routine permission for proceeding for Haj on the personal intervention by President Bhutto. Reliable sources expect him not to return to the Islamic State. He can't go to Bangladesh either. This devout Pakistani Muslim is compelled to migrate to some other country. Where is the ideology of Muslim nationhood? The dilemma of Pakistani ideologues figures in "*Pakistan: Its Ideology and Foreign Policy*", by Arif Hussain, a Pakistani author. Discussing the very basis of Pakistan, he says, "Islam, which made Pakistan a reality has so far proved a mirage as an ideological framework for Pakistani society. Rarely in history has any nation applied herself so vehemently to the search for a theory by which to live and the quest for an identity of her own".

## V

THE Pakistani theorists have woven round the whole set-up a web of the myth. Even after the constitutional Accord of October last, the attempts at constitution-making are suffocated in the web of the myth. Mian Tufail Ahmed, Amir-e-Jamaat-e-Islami has criticised the constitutional draft. In his statement of January 3, he says, "The constitutional draft does not reflect the ideology of Pakistan. Nor does it reflect the democratic principles and aspirations. There is no workable provision to stop passage of laws conflicting with the Quran and Sunnah". The myth is stifling President Bhutto's hopes for a unanimously approved new Constitution. President Bhutto himself has used

the phrase Islam to an extent that he can't bypass such objections.

Arif Hussain has correctly analysed the hopeless situation created by the myth. "After so much propaganda", he says, "Pakistan has become the victim of her own words; ideology itself has become more important than finding a reasonable and possible solution of the various problems. So intensive and extensive is the use of the word Islam that the mode of realising any values, and not these values themselves, has become the truth. No policy or change is acceptable unless it is branded with the name of Islam." Z.A. Suleri goes a step further. He is not prepared to accept socialism even if it is qualified by the epithet-Islamic. "We can own socialism—atheistic philosophy and regimentation—only if we become apostate to Islam. While the Europeans outlasted their loss of religious loyalty because they were there even before the advent of Christianity, Pakistanis cannot give up Islam without committing national hara-kiri, for their body-social is due to Islam." (*Theories and Facts: Nawa-e-Waqt*: 2.7.72.)

The references to Islam at every moment and every step do sound to be genuine, particularly when its interpretations change under circumstantial pressures. A cool-headed analysis of Pakistan's present problems would reveal that most of them are due to the ideological hoax. Taking for example the regional aspirations of the people, their continued neglect in the name of ideology has resulted in the emergence of Bangladesh. They have infused life into 'Jiye Sindh' and Pakhtoon movements. The present times demand much more than what the ideology offers.

Lately there has been a debate in the papers and periodicals on the question of nationalities. The ideology enthusiasts think just in terms of a Muslim nation, whereas the modernists believe that Pakistan is a federation of four—nay five nationalities. Apart from Punjabi, Sindhi, Pathan and Baluch, the Urdu speaking Muhajirs who are being termed as Pak-Indians have claimed to be the fifth nationality. The concept of multi-nationalism is dreaded by the theorists. Suleri refers to this conflict thus: "The current conflict is clearly between those who want the Islamic origins of this country to be vindicated and those who want its disruption into nationalities or at least that the character of the State should be cast into a secular mould. They almost effaced the name of the Pakistani nation behind the larger than life images of provincial nomenclatures". (*An Ideological State: Nawa-e-Waqt*: 19.11.72) The paper shows awareness of India's success in solving her regional problems, but wants similar success through ideology. "It is a painful reality that in India where live two linguistic nationalities and over a hundred cultural sections, has emerged one nation—the Indian nation, but stung with the theory of four nationalities, we have not been able to emerge as one nation, despite the fact that we are all Muslims." (*Nawa-e-Waqt*: Editorial: 29.7.72)

The old school is conscious of the limitations of ideology, but is not prepared to change—in fact would oppose a change. The people of Pakistan are being



confused through a rosy picture of the ideology to the extent that the ideology is being attributed to Allah. Prof. Saeed Ahmed Khan's special article on the two-nation theory is a typical example. "Two nation theory originated not from Qaid-e-Azam, Allama Iqbal or Sir Syed. The creator of this universe created this concept too. There has been right from the beginning clear-cut division and distinction between believers and non-believers". (*Nawa-e-Waqt*: 22.12.72) Now this type of interpretation is likely to influence the thinking of semi-literate and illiterate who, like many developing countries, constitute the majority of Pakistan.

## VI

In the current ideological conflict the modernists have emerged stronger. The rightists are desperately trying to save their side. The writers have been brought in the array. Jeelani Kamran's literary and intellectual study of the ideology of Pakistan is being circulated in large numbers. Jeelani Kamran is a well-known Urdu poet and literary figure of Pakistan. Syed Mohd. Taqi, the well-known Urdu journalist who belongs to the fifth nationality, offers too simple a formula for ideological transformation of the Pakistani people into a nation, "Three factors can help in a speedy emergence of the Pakistani nation. They are common religion, common geography and common language." (*Mashriq*: 1-8-72) The events of the past over two years go to prove that the people have discarded the illusions of the Islam Pasands. But in order to grab power new elements are being exploited for creating new illusions. Such new illusions adopted by the literate are expected to confuse the vocal sections of the middle class. All attempts are being made to show that the ideology still breathes.

Any formula which does not respect the regional aspirations of the people is destined to fail. Even the ideology which was nourished through powerful media for 25 years has failed. The ideology has infected Pakistan's foreign policy too. Of course, several other factors have also contributed to its diseased growth. West Pakistan tended to look for an artificial identity (for the whole of Pakistan) based on its tenuous links with the Middle East. This was both historical and cultural imbecility. Not only did it make the West Pakistani personality schizophrenic it led to the total alienation of East Pakistan from the concept of Pakistan itself. After the separation of the Eastern wing, this tendency is likely to increase further resulting ultimately in further frustration. Cutting the roots of the Pakistani people from the soil of the sub-continent would deprive them of the social-psychological nourishment they badly need. It is only through their continued link with the social and cultural life of the sub-continent that they can get vital nourishment. Deprived of this, the nation is most likely to wither away. Time has proved that 25 years, or for that matter 50 years, are too short a period to undo what has been done by centuries.

The ideologues are the new converts. Those who accepted and supported the two-nation theory before the creation of Pakistan, talk of it no more. Their own experience has convinced them of the hollowness of the

ideology. Who are the new converts? The widely circulated Urdu weekly of Pakistan, *Akhbar-e-Jahan*, exposes them thus: "The objectives for which Pakistan was created have been shattered to pieces. Those who had opposed the creation of Pakistan, have taken upon themselves to act as the greatest champions of the ideology of Pakistan." (20.9.72)

## VII

THE ideology, besides its exposure and rejection through the years, received the fatal blow from the Bengali Muslims who freed themselves of not only the hegemony of the Western wing, but also the shackles of ideology. They have opted through their constitution for Nationalism, Democracy, Socialism and Secularism. These objectives of the Bangladesh people are opposed to the ideology of Pakistan. It is precisely for this reason that the ideology enthusiasts stand in the way of the sane decision for recognition of Bangla Desh. To maintain the facade of Muslim nationhood, they are opposing recognition with emotional gunpowder. The Islam Pasands like Maulana Maudoodi, Kaikaus, Dr. Syed Abdullah, Agha Shorish Kaskmiri, Rana Nazarul Rehman, Shah Ahmed Noorani and others are being projected by A.K. Sumar—S.A. Rehman—Z.A. Suleri trio as the saviours of Pakistan. Suleri, the bilingual journalist—as he is known in the English Press of Pakistan—is stretching any topic and any subject to oppose recognition of Bangladesh. "The worst setback Pakistan has suffered is in the field of ideology. The repudiation of Muslim nationhood which Bangladesh's existence implies is ruinous for Pakistan. The whole concept has been rendered inviable. Things have no doubt changed in the subcontinent and Pakistanis are hard put to devising plans to defend their independence.....The concept of Muslim nationhood must be held fast as the sheet-anchor of our existence and this requires rejection of Bangladesh's recognition." (India's Hegemony: *Nawa-e-Waqt*: 7.1.73)

"Once the invocation of Islam becomes irrelevant as it must after the acceptance and recognition of the secession, West Pakistan will not be capable of holding together. When Muslim nationhood will no longer be available for its cohesion, its fabric will disintegrate." (From Simla to Simla via Tashkent: *Nawa-e-Waqt* 9.7.72)

"Everything will hang on our attitude to Bangladesh. If we recognise it, not only will the concept of Muslim nationhood be proved false and hollow, but West Pakistan will be tied to the shackles of India's sphere of influence and squeezed out of existence as an independent and sovereign country. 1973 may determine the future course of Pakistan. What is likely to be?" (Whither Pakistan: *Nawa-e-Waqt* 4.1.73)

The ideology of Pakistan, suffering from its inherent limitations and contradictions is gripped by ailments. The rightists are trying frantically to convince Pakistanis that ideology is still living. Can they? Will it not be better if they bend energies and talents to solving the problems of people rather than binding them with an illusory







